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THE Atlantic

JULY/AUGUST 2007

WHY CHINA'S RISE IS GOOD FOR US

by JAMES FALLOWS

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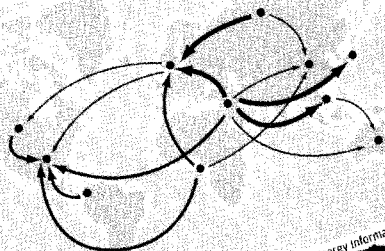
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**There are 193 countries in the world.
None of them are energy independent.**

So who's holding whom over a barrel?

Global Oil Flows



Source: Energy Information Administration

The fact is, the vast majority of countries rely on the few energy-producing nations that won the geological lottery, blessing them with abundant hydrocarbons. And yet, even regions with plenty of raw resources import some form of energy. Saudi Arabia, for example, the world's largest oil exporter, imports refined petroleum products like gasoline.

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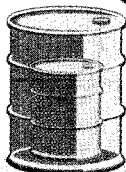
Succeeding in securing energy for everyone doesn't have to come at the expense of anyone. Once we all start to think differently about energy, then we can truly make this promise a reality.

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Projected Global Oil Demand

■ 2004 DEMAND
82 mbpd*

■ 2030 DEMAND
115 mbpd



Source: International Energy Agency
*million barrels per day

OBJECTIVES EFFICIENCIES

ENERGY IMPORTS BY OIL EXPORTING COUNTRIES

	GASOLINE	ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	COAL
Saudi Arabia				
Russia				
Norway				
UAE				
Nigeria				

Source: Energy Information Administration

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

- DIVERSIFY ENERGY SUPPLIES
- FIND MORE TRADITIONAL FUELS
- DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES AND RENEWABLES
- FOSTER OPEN MARKETS & TRANSPARENCY
- ENCOURAGE CONSERVATION/ENERGY EFFICIENCY

⚠ Chevron Steps Taken:

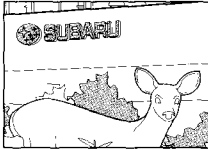
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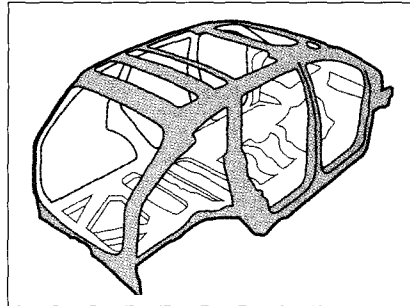
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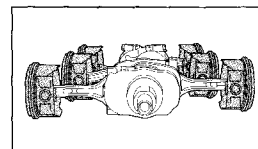
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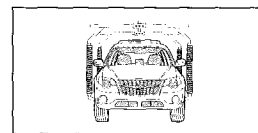
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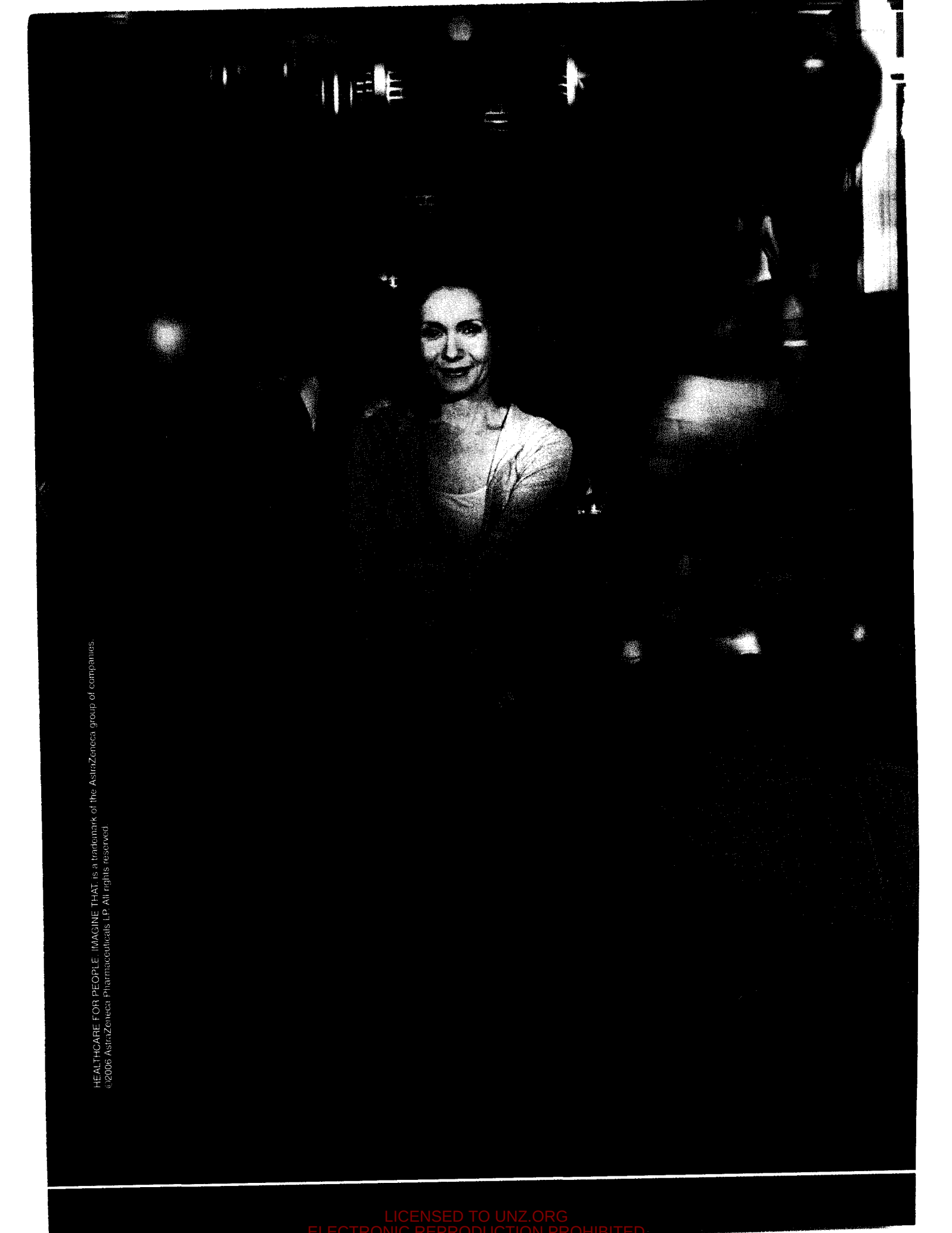
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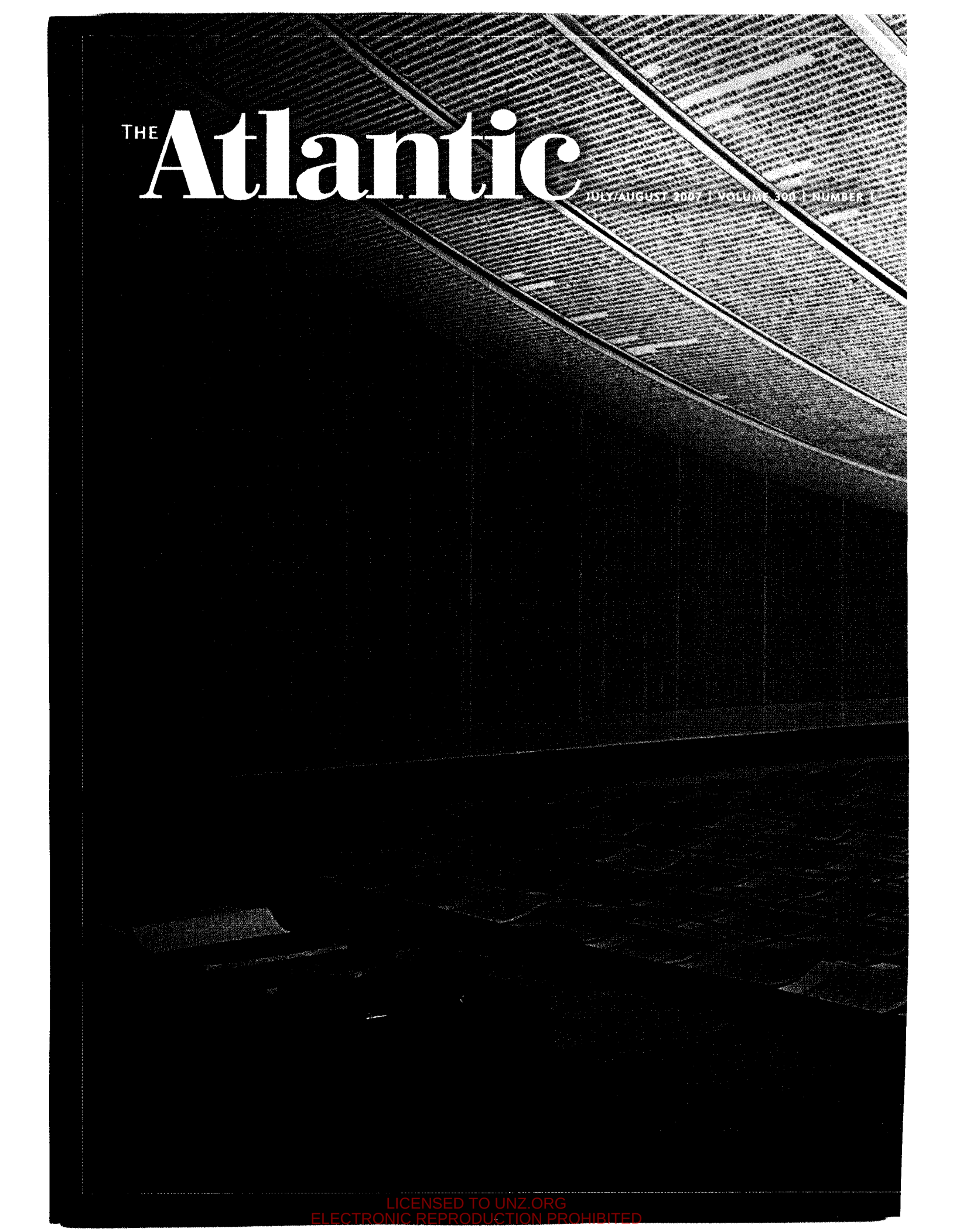
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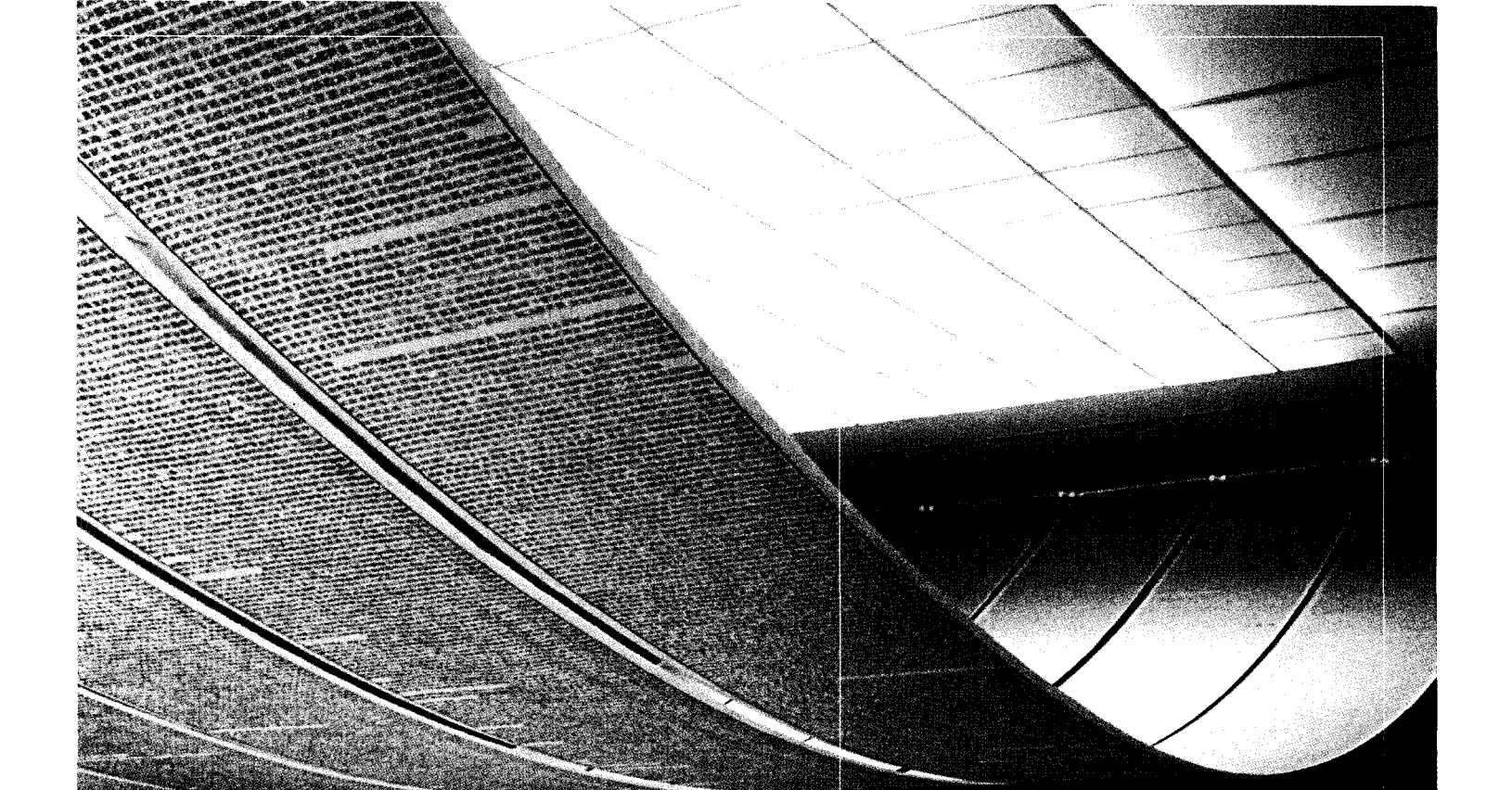
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Xu Bing's mixed-media installation *Book From the Sky*, pictured here at the National Gallery of Canada, is one of the most important works of 20th-century Chinese art. Britta Erickson surveys the thriving Chinese contemporary-art scene in "A Cultural Revolution."

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by Istvan Banyai



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Sheryl Cates
Chief Executive Officer
National Domestic Violence Hotline



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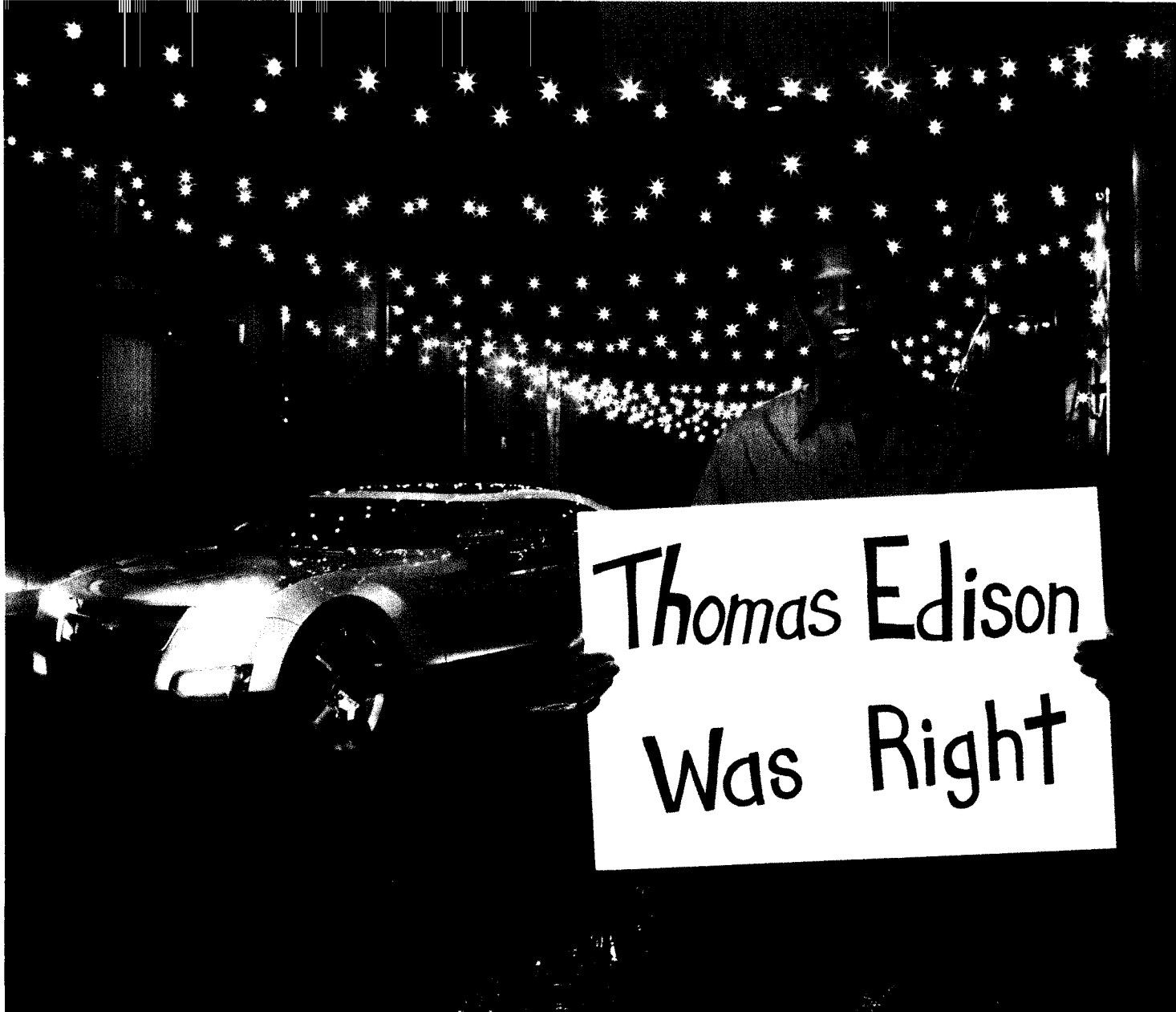
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Jelani Aliyu

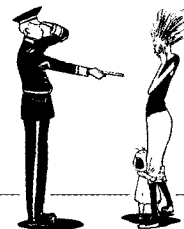
Lead Exterior Designer, Chevrolet Volt



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JULY/AUGUST 2007 THE ATLANTIC



MILITARY POLITICS

Andrew Bacevich has it both right and wrong concerning the current state of U.S. civil-military relations ("Warrior Politics," May *Atlantic*). He correctly observes that "hallowed principles of civilian control ... have eroded badly." We have indeed drifted far from the ideal of true *civilian supremacy*: sound public oversight of legislative oversight of executive oversight of an accountable, self-policing military. Instead, we suffer from *civilian subjugation*, in which too many civilian officials are militarily and strategically illiterate; are advocates for, rather than overseers of, the military; or are more militaristic even than the military itself.

Bacevich's concerns, though, about lower-ranking military personnel asserting themselves publicly on policy issues seem misplaced. It would be one thing if these voices were pushing us to war. But they are, at best, seeking to express their opposition to those in authority who misuse them for selfish political ends.

There is a tacit social contract of mutual rights, obligations, and expectations that binds the parties in the civil-military relationship to one another. Where civilian officials show themselves to be strategically incompetent, they have broken the contract. This is where the military must step up to provide strategically sound advice—to involve itself, that is, in the high politics of statecraft. When senior officers fail to do so, who is left to fulfill this obligation?

Had the military's senior officers spoken up for those in the ranks when it counted—before marching mutely off to war in Iraq—the few civic-minded dissenters in uniform who are now speaking out would have had no reason to do so.

Gregory D. Foster
National Defense University
Washington, D.C.

Andrew Bacevich writes: "To assuage uneasy consciences, the many who do not serve proclaim their high regard for the few who do." I find his cynicism hurtfully shocking. Some of us express our high regard for our soldiers because we hold them in high regard. As the sister of a National Guard soldier who went to Iraq this year precisely because he's willing to die for the principle of civilian leadership while we at home sort this mess out politically, I can state that my high regard for such a man has nothing to do with an uneasy conscience.

Also, I take issue with his assertion that soldiers should be limited to making themselves heard through voting. In modern politics one's point of view is worth nothing if it cannot be publicized or advocated collectively. Furthermore, our constitutional rights are expressly not limited to voting. Rather they extend to freedoms of expression, especially where political speech is concerned. To constrain only soldiers, among citizens, from expressing their views is tantamount to disenfranchising them.

Emily Miller
Golden, Colo.

Andrew Bacevich replies:

Gregory Foster wants soldiers to involve themselves in "the high politics of statecraft," apparently assuming that soldiers will see things his way. But there's no guarantee that the politicking soldiers will share Foster's enlightened views.

Since writing "Warrior Politics," I learned of another embryonic soldiers' lobby, this one the brainchild of a naval officer currently serving in Iraq. Calling itself the "Appeal for Courage," this initiative (www.appealforcourage.org) is petitioning Congress to "halt any calls for retreat" in Iraq. With that end in mind, the 2,000-plus soldiers who've endorsed this petition urge their "political leaders to actively oppose media efforts which

embolden my enemy while demoralizing American support at home." In short, they advocate censorship—an example of what we can anticipate from a politically active military.

I apologize for delivering a hurtful shock to Emily Miller. Apparently, she's keen to allow soldiers the same rights as citizens not in uniform. If she gets her way, we won't have an army; we'll have a rabble. Absent the constraints that she finds offensive, the discipline that is a precondition to military effectiveness will vanish.

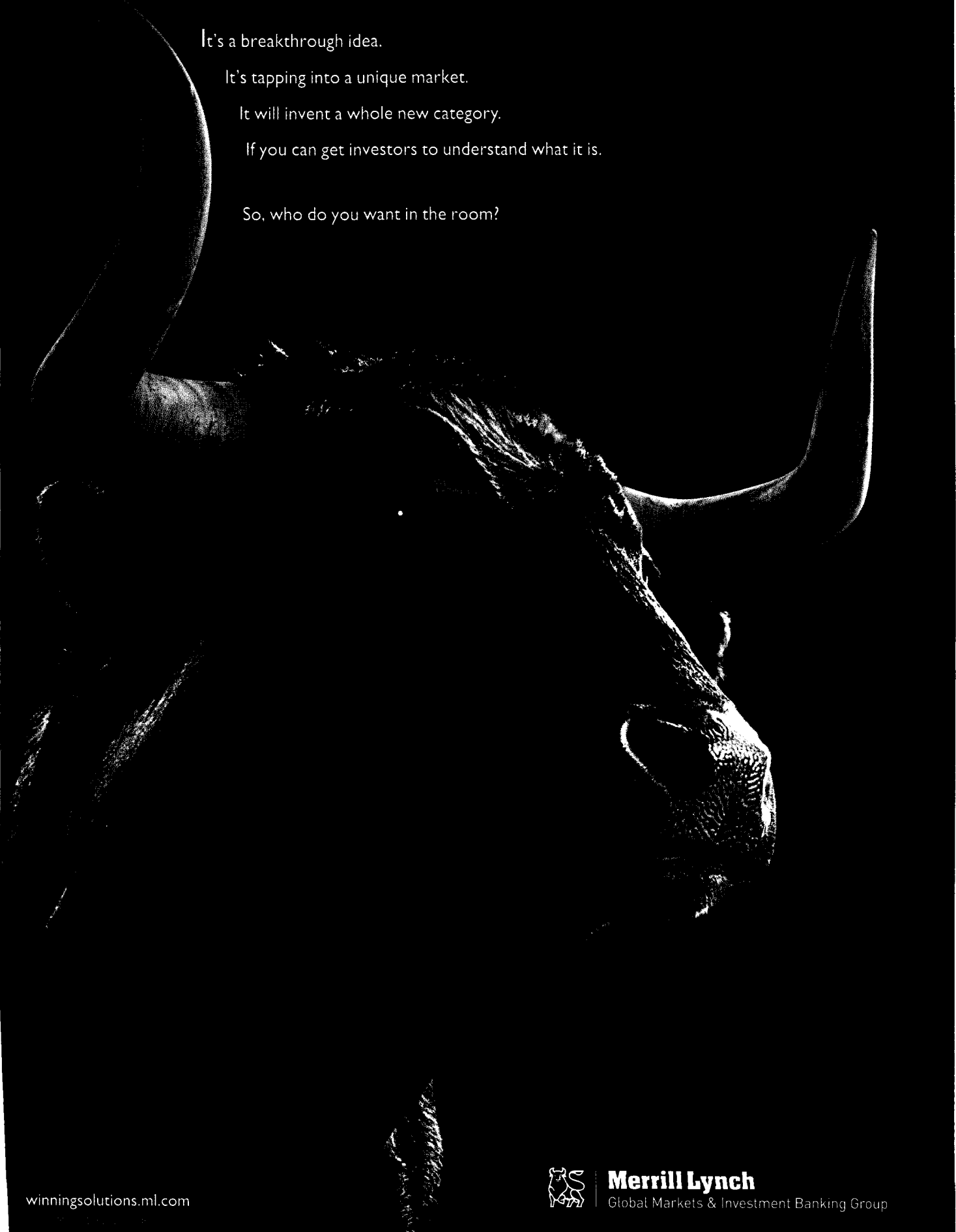
THE GIFT OF THE SOVIETS

In his review of Norman Davies's *Europe at War, 1939–1945* ("Stalin's Gift," May *Atlantic*), Benjamin Schwarz writes, "At its most intense, the war in the West was fought between 15 Allied and 15 Wehrmacht divisions." While I have nothing but admiration for the efforts of the Red Army against Nazi Germany, Schwarz's description of the Allied war effort in the West is incorrect. During the Battle of France, there were many times more than 15 divisions involved on both sides—the Battle of the Bulge, for example, included about 35 Allied and 26 German division-sized units. Schwarz also ignores a larger point, which is that the Western Allies were engaged in a multi-front war, whereas the Soviets were fighting on only one front. U.S. forces, for example, were engaged in several theaters simultaneously, including France, Italy, China, and the Pacific.

James F. Schumaker
Kiev, Ukraine

Benjamin Schwarz replies:

I didn't say that only 30 Allied and Axis divisions were deployed in the West, but that the most intense and crucial combat in the West involved 30 divisions. Richard Overy, probably the foremost scholar of the Allies' war in Western Europe,



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makes this assertion in his acclaimed book Why the Allies Won, and he defines this period as June through August 1944, when the Allies, facing ferocious German opposition, broke out from the Normandy beachhead (Operation Cobra) and "the battle was still poised." Neither Overy nor I was thinking of the Battle of the Bulge. (Contrary to James Schumaker's assertion, the Bulge, fought in December 1944 and January 1945, wasn't part of the Battle of France, which had ended with the liberation of Paris in August 1944.) The Bulge looms large in the American imagination because the Allies failed to anticipate it, but the Axis effort had clearly collapsed by its second day and didn't represent a strategic threat to the Allied position—indeed, a delighted Patton, knowing that German forces didn't have the resources to pull off the offensive, urged allowing them to drive toward Paris, since they would soon literally run out of gas and could then be isolated and destroyed. The Germans could launch that attack, which all their commanders knew would fail, only because of the rapid and temporary shift of crack German armored units from the Eastern Front. (These units had to be quickly returned to the East to counter the Red Army's siege of Budapest.) Moreover, Schumaker overstates the number of Germans engaged in the battle. Here he's presumably following the German generals who, in an attempt to appear to fulfill Hitler's orders for a huge offensive, engaged in what a U.S. Army historian of the battle describes as "a kind of double entry order of battle." In fact, the Germans deployed just over 17 divisions (most less than full strength)—a total of 200,000 troops.

The U.S. did fight in the Pacific as well as in Europe, but wasn't dividing its vast resources nearly equally between the two theaters. As Overy has calculated, 85 percent of the American effort was dedicated to defeating Germany, only 15 percent to the war with Japan.

DEFICIT SPENDING

The usually astute Clive Crook misunderstands the U.S. trade deficit ("When the Buck Stops," May *Atlantic*). It is untrue that the trade deficit "has to

be financed by borrowing." If, for example, Toyota sells a Camry to an American and uses the sales proceeds to buy more land for expansion of its factory in Kentucky, America's trade deficit rises without any American borrowing a cent. The trade deficit is not synonymous with debt.

Donald J. Boudreaux
Fairfax, Va.

AIDS IN THE KINGDOM

While I found Nadya Labi's "The Kingdom in the Closet" (May *Atlantic*) very informative, I was struck by the fact that there was no mention of AIDS. Certainly that must be addressed in a culture with widespread homosexual activity.

Annie Kirchner
Kensington, Md.

Nadya Labi replies:

Annie Kirchner raises a topic that deserves additional discussion. Last year, the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia reported that about 10,000 of the kingdom's 27 million or so people were HIV-positive or had AIDS. That statistic is probably artificially low, though the numbers have been increasing in recent years even by the ministry's own count. Still, it's fair to say that AIDS has not reached crisis proportions in the kingdom. Any Saudi citizen with AIDS has the right to free medical care, which includes costly antiretroviral drugs.

The government's attitude toward the disease is not wholly enlightened, however. Foreigners who test HIV-positive are often imprisoned and then deported. During my time in Jeddah, I visited the King Saud Hospital for Infectious and Contagious Diseases, which has a ward for AIDS patients. While in the ward, I saw a man lying in bed with his leg chained to the bedpost. I was unable to ask the doctors why the patient was imprisoned in this manner, because my visit was unofficial, but my translator told me that this kind of treatment is customary for foreign patients who are HIV-positive. Another journalist who visited the same hospital in 2005 interviewed HIV-positive patients who were kept in a crowded cage.

DEBATING REALITY TV

Michael Hirschorn needs to lighten up ("The Case for Reality TV," May *Atlantic*). Everyone needs their guilty pleasures, and "reality" television is his. My own include the oeuvre of Patrick Swayze, but I don't attempt to defend my fascination by criticizing the snobbery of folks who dismiss it as vapid pap—precisely because it is vapid pap and thus, a guilty pleasure.

"Reality" television is just as contrived as regular old television, so much so that its editors and various behind-the-scenes types have lobbied for its inclusion in industry awards for writing. It presents a deliberately chosen spectrum of crazies, fame whores, and the economically and emotionally downtrodden, milking them for ratings in exchange for the chance to feel "special" very, very briefly.

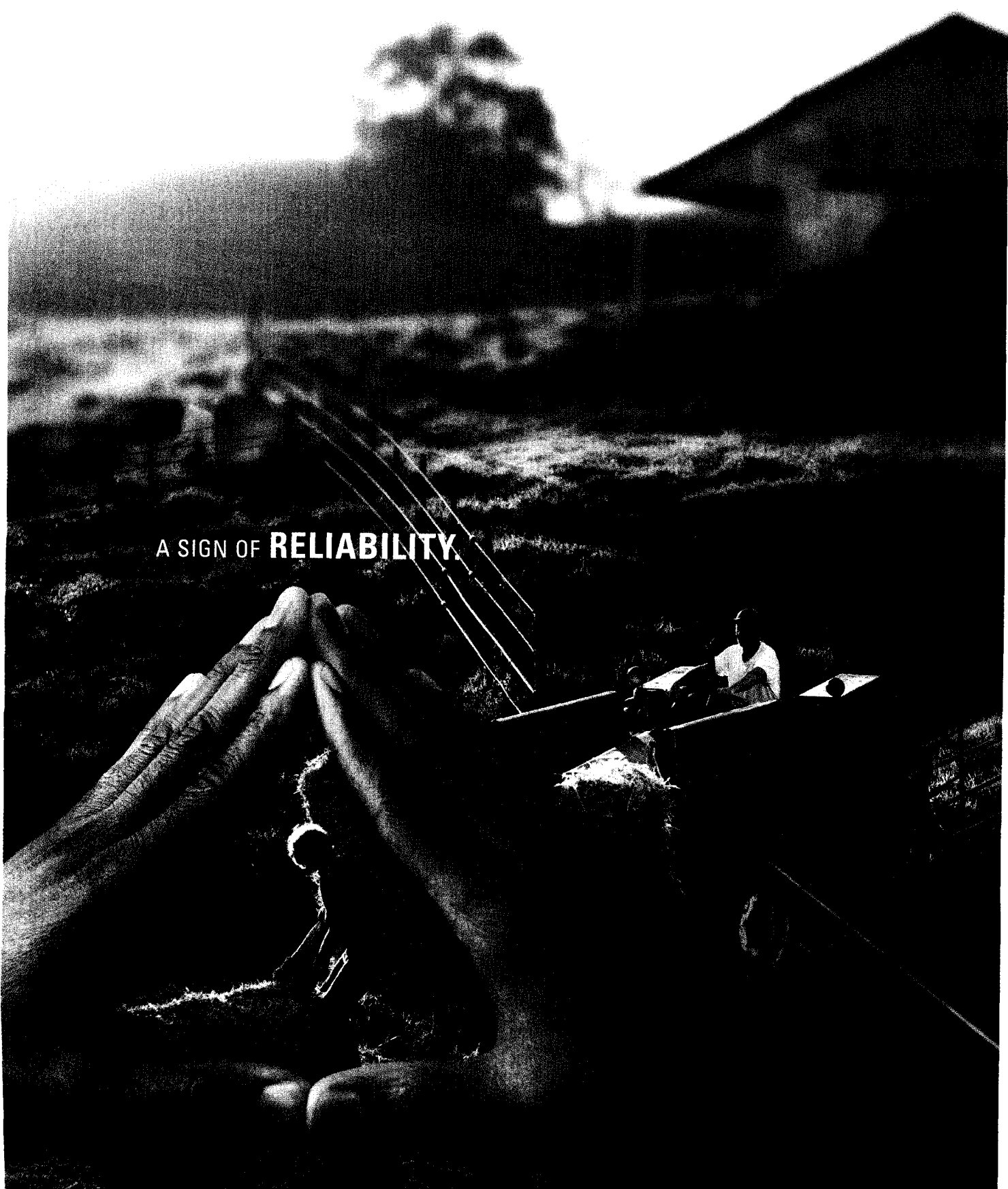
Is this a good thing? In some cases, it can be. Shows like *Extreme Home Makeover* create change for people in need of serious help, and some programs help their participants realize professional dreams. But there is an enormous element of condescension in most of these shows. Witness Hirschorn's own commentary on *Deadliest Catch*, in which he writes, "The producers have made it riveting by formatting the whole season as a sporting event ... that, for all its contrivance, gives structure and meaning to the fishermen's efforts."

Television doesn't provide these men with "structure and meaning"—their actual jobs and real, unedited lives do that, all on their own. If Hirschorn can't derive "meaning" without the help of a contrived sporting event, then perhaps he should skip a few episodes of *America's Next Top Model* and take a philosophy class—or simply take a walk.

Matthew Morse
New York, N.Y.

Editors' Note:

In David Samuels's article "Grand Illusions" (June *Atlantic*), the name of the Lebanese prime minister, Fouad Siniora, was misspelled. We regret the error.



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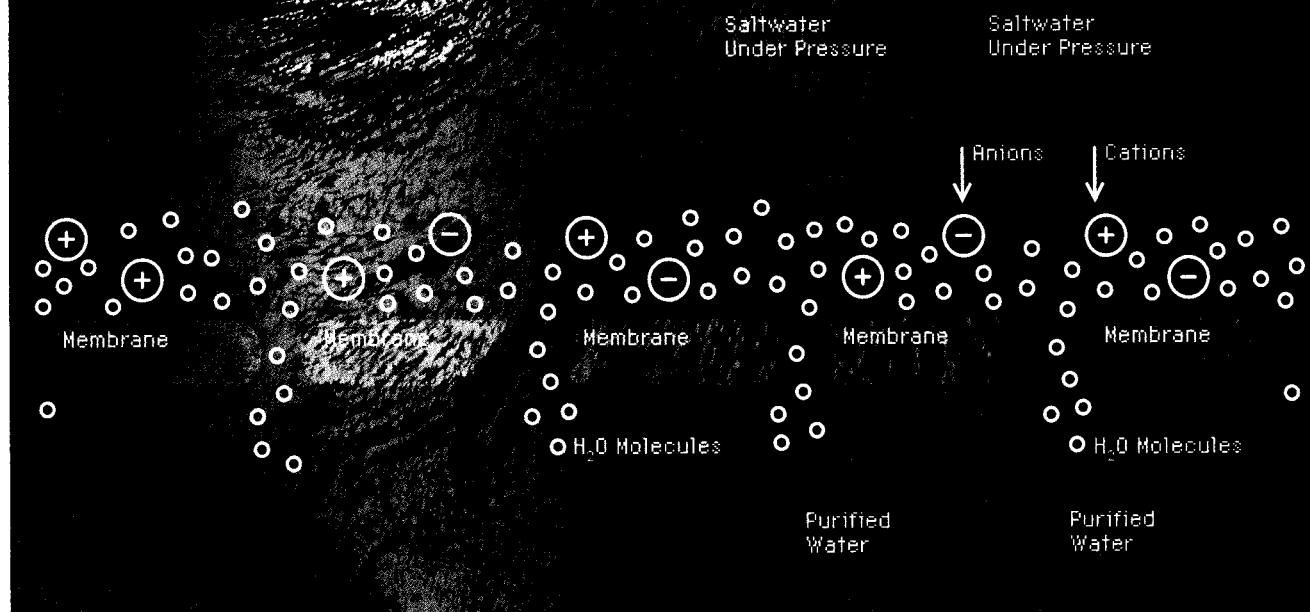
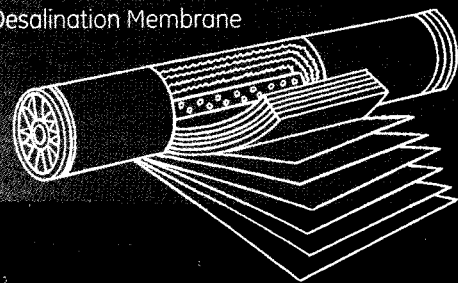
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THE AGENDA

JULY/AUGUST 2007 THE ATLANTIC



COMMENT

Why early primaries will make for a better president

Campaign Seasoning

BY JONATHAN RAUCH

The presidential campaign is under way. You may have noticed. It has been under way for months. And months. You may have noticed that, too. By the end of the first quarter of 2007, with the election still the better part of two years away, the candidates had already raised nearly a third as much money as their counterparts did during the entire 1996 campaign. Never have so much campaigning and money-chasing begun so early.

The reason, or at least a reason, is that the primary calendar has relentlessly advanced. States jockey for early and, as they hope, influential positions, and Iowa

(which holds a caucus) and New Hampshire continue to insist on preceding all the others. In apparent violation of the laws of physics, New Hampshire appears willing to precede itself, if necessary. The pressure is constantly forward.

By swarming to the front of the calendar, the states risk packing themselves in so tightly as to create what amounts to a national super-primary. Next year a majority of states, controlling a majority of the delegates to the nominating conventions, plan to hold their contests in the three weeks from January 14 to February 5, with more than 20 on the

5th alone. (By comparison, in 2004 only nine states had made their picks by the first Tuesday in February.) The candidates would need to clone themselves to campaign in so many states at once.

The upshot, as the *Washington Post* columnist David Broder wrote earlier this year, is that “a selection system that used to begin in March now is over in February—at the latest.” He pronounced this state of affairs “insane.” Actually, there is some chance that the process, especially on the Democratic side, might last beyond February, if no clear leader emerges from the multistate extravaganza of

February 5; but if, as many observers expect, the choices are settled in time for Valentine's Day, here is a heartening thought: What we're seeing may in fact be creeping sanity.

A common worry is that front-loaded, early primaries favor politicians "who begin with high name recognition and big bankrolls," as an editorial in *The Nation* recently put it. That worry may have some merit, but it squares poorly with another common worry, which is that packed-together primaries might allow a flaky candidate to ride early-state momentum to the nomination. Pay your money, pick your worry. The advantage of big-name, big-money candidates

govern. Long campaigns test steadiness, discipline, organizational skill, and, what is so important in a president, the ability to recover and learn from mistakes. They also test how well candidates will wear in the public eye. If Rudy Giuliani is going to turn out to be unpalatably imperious, or Hillary Clinton intolerably cold, eight months should uncover those traits.

For me, though, what tips the scales in favor of early primaries, with the resulting long general-election campaign, is that they give U.S. politics an opportunity to mimic one of the best features of British-style parliamentary politics: the shadow government. American commentators often observe, with envy, that political

season), to establish themselves as party leaders, mount national campaigns, and (re)position themselves for the general electorate. Naming prospective appointees, apart from the vice-presidential nominee, was out of the question in the time available. People often complained that the American presidential race as a whole, from exploratory committee through general election, was too long; the real problem was that the general-election race was too short.

Today's earlier primary cycle can rectify the imbalance, if presumptive nominees take advantage of it. Conventions nowadays are no more than coronations, and the pretense that they matter has mostly melted away. Modern candidates feel more or less free to act like nominees from the day their lead becomes unassailable. If Giuliani and Clinton, or McCain and Obama, or whoever and whoever, stitched up the nomination in mid-February, they could easily vet and name slates of key appointees in time for the conventions. (An encouraging straw wafted by in April, when McCain, his nascent campaign flagging, reeled off a list of impressive people he might appoint to top Pentagon jobs.) By November, the voters would have a clear picture not only of the rival candidates but also of the rival administrations.

Having this information in the hands of voters would be a good thing. Having it in the hands of presidents-elect would be even better. "Transition," as a description of what happens in the 11 weeks between Election Day and Inauguration Day, is the most optimistic euphemism in American politics. What really happens is a chaotic scramble to fill dozens of top government jobs. During this bumpiest passage in American governance, the ride would be smoother if a slate of senior officials—secretaries of state, defense, and treasury, the chief economic adviser, and so on—were standing by on the day after the election.

So hurry up, New Hampshire. Step on it, Iowa. In fact, how does Thanksgiving sound? ■

Jonathan Rauch is an *Atlantic* correspondent and a guest scholar at the Brookings Institution.

If the candidates sewed up the nominations in February, they could name key appointees in time for the conventions.

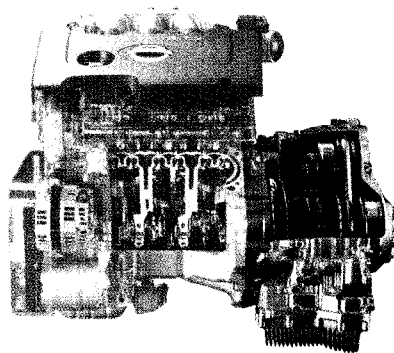
is a fact of life, and the older, slower primary schedule did not prevent the nearly unknown Jimmy Carter from riding early momentum to the nomination in 1976.

A more meaningful change is that earlier-starting, earlier-ending primary campaigns allow more time for general-election campaigns, and thus more time to road-test the candidates, which seems like a good thing. Consider a candidate like Barack Obama, who—well, there is no candidate like Barack Obama, who entered the race with a record of inexperience no other serious contender could match. If he were to sew up the nomination in February, we would have eight months to get to know him, an insurance policy that the country's most recent experiments with inexperience—Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush—suggest is wise.

Nothing fully prepares a person for the presidency, of course, but general-election campaigns are the best preparation we've got. If it is true that the presidency has become a "permanent campaign," and that presidents govern the way they campaign, it is also true that candidates campaign the way they would

campaigns in parliamentary systems are much shorter. In Britain, the formal campaign and election span weeks, not months or years. But such commentators tend to overlook the fact that by the time a British election rolls around, voters have had months or years to get to know the candidates, parties, agendas, and even cabinets. The party and prime minister in office are known quantities. Typically, opposition leaders are familiar too, because the parties choose their leaders well in advance of most elections. And these leaders choose shadow cabinets, the men and women who would ascend to ministerial portfolios if the party won. In other words, the voters decide not just between two candidates or even two parties but, in effect, between two governments.

Until the modern era of front-loaded primaries, any similar arrangement in the United States would have been all but impossible. It usually took well into spring or summer of an election year for the presumptive nominees to emerge from the field, and they weren't home free until the political conventions. Then they basically had two months, September and October (August being vacation



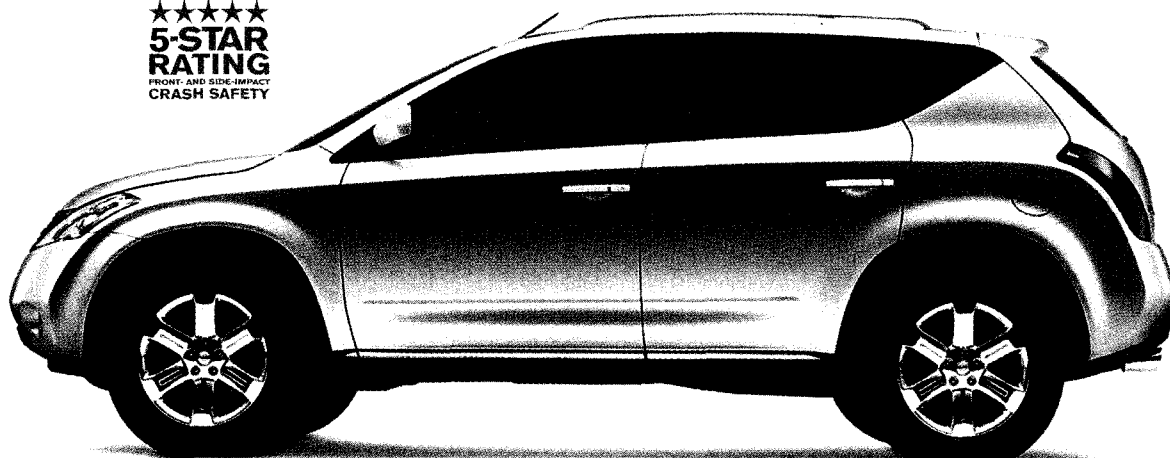
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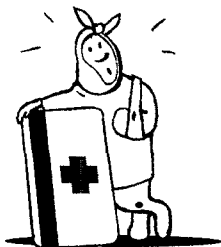
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CALENDAR

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

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JULY 1

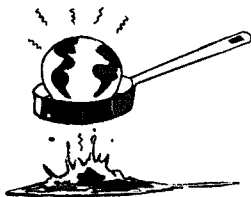
Doctors' Orders

Massachusetts's landmark health-insurance law takes effect today, requiring that every resident have coverage, much as every driver is required to carry auto insurance. The commonwealth negotiated with insurers to provide subsidized plans for the poor. Scoff-laws will face penalties on their 2008 taxes. (Further requirements such as prescription coverage are due next year.)

JULY 1

Trade Deadline

President Bush's "trade promotion authority"—the law allowing him to negotiate international trade deals and present them to Congress for a yes-or-no vote—expires today. To renew it, the White House must broker a deal with Democrats who want protections for workers (foreign and domestic) and the environment included in future trade pacts.



JULY 4

"Independence" Day

Hoping to push America down the road to "energy independence," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has pledged to pass anti-global-warming legislation by today. She's pushing an EU-like cap-and-trade system to cut greenhouse gases.

JULY 7

Rock My World

Al Gore plays host to environmentally minded music fans the world over with Live Earth, a 24-hour series of seven concerts on seven continents that'll feature 150 pop luminaries (including Madonna, the Police, and Kanye West) raising awareness and money to fight global warming.

JULY 7

Gambling on Love

One-armed bandits may get a workout in Vegas this weekend: Wedding halls in Sin City are expecting a flood of couples betting that the triple-seven date (7/7/07) will bring a little luck to their nuptials.



JULY 11

A Family Business

Syrians are expected to pass a referendum today granting another seven-year term to Baathist President Bashar al-Assad, who assumed power in 2000 after the death of his strongman father, the country's longtime ruler.

JULY 21

Posh Gig

Aging British soccer god David Beckham has crossed the pond to play Major League Soccer for the Los Angeles Galaxy beginning today. Beckham's reputed five-year, \$27.5 million contract is expected to pay off more on the marketing front than on the soccer field.



JULY 21

Closing the Book on Harry Potter

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, the seventh and final installment in J. K. Rowling's kid-wizard epic, arrives in bookstores today. Tremble, muggles: Rowling has vowed it'll be the last of the Potter stories and dropped hints about offing major characters.

JULY 23

American Soldier Stands Trial

Private Jesse Spielman goes to trial today, accused of raping a 14-year-old Iraqi girl and murdering her and her family. Spielman maintains his innocence. Three others charged in the case already pleaded guilty and received sentences ranging from five to 100 years.

AUGUST 3

Caste Off

India's supreme court hears a dispute today between the country's upper and lower classes over quotas for the "socially and educationally backwards" classes in elite schools, a vestige of caste laws from the 1930s. India's quota system is one of the world's most formal and rigid.

ALSO IN JULY/AUGUST:

Another U.S.A.

During a July summit in Ghana, all 53 members of the African Union will consider a measure to join together as the United States of Africa and share markets, citizenship, foreign policy, defense, and a currency. Small African nations generally favor the idea (first put forward in 1963), but the continent's large regional powers are unlikely to support it.

U R Fired :(

In response to a sharp increase in text-messaged layoffs, South Korea, a country mad for thumb-typing, will change its employment laws in July and require employers to provide hard copies of pink slips.

On the Fence

President Bush has set himself an August deadline for the formidable task of passing immigration reform that will satisfy conservative hard-liners, who want to seal the borders, and moderates, such as members of the business community, who want to maintain some openness. An early proposal includes guest-worker visas and a legalization program for certain illegal aliens; both require applicants to leave the country and pay steep fines.

THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

Attacking cocaine at its source was meant to drive up prices, yet U.S. street dealers are selling it for less than ever.

Snow Fall

BY KEN DERMOTA

If the four-year slog in Iraq seems endless, consider this: The “war on drugs,” begun by Richard Nixon, escalated under Ronald Reagan, and continued by every president since, is now in its 37th year. In this long struggle, the past few months have been especially fruitful. In March, the U.S. Coast Guard intercepted a freighter off Panama laden with 20 tons of cocaine, in the largest maritime bust ever. That was followed in April by Colombian authorities’ seizure of a 15-ton cache most likely awaiting shipment to Mexico.

Of course, the good news is soured by the fact that cocaine production remains robust enough to allow shipment in 20-ton batches. The Coast Guard would need to repeat its recent haul about every two weeks to intercept all the cocaine that Colombia sends north, and there’s no guarantee traffickers wouldn’t just ship more to make up for the losses, as they have always done.

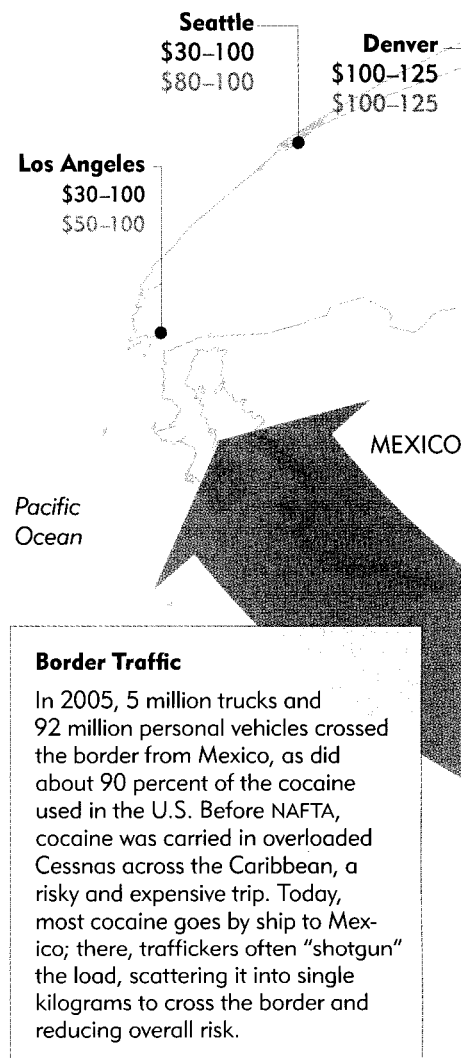
The map to the right tracks cocaine shipments from Bolivia and Peru, and from Colombia, which is the source of about 90 percent of the cocaine sold by U.S. dealers. As each kilo island-hops across the Caribbean or travels north through Central America and over the U.S.-Mexican border, its value increases. The rising price reflects cumulatively higher risk to distributors—mostly of shootings or arrests at international borders. Clearly, policing has a big impact on cocaine prices: On the streets of Bogotá, a *gramo* of cocaine can be had for under \$2. Recreational users in America, on the other hand, typically pay upward of \$50 a gram.

Yet over time, cocaine prices per pure gram in the United States have steadily

fallen, from \$600 in the early 1980s to less than \$200 by the mid-1990s. In 2000, under Plan Colombia, the U.S. took the fight directly to the coca fields, spending nearly as much each year on aerial coca eradication and fighting cocaine-dealing rebels in Colombia as Ireland spends on its entire military. Plan Colombia has cost \$4.7 billion since its inception, but cocaine on U.S. streets has only gotten cheaper, while American demand has remained steady.

Why the price decline? More-efficient distribution networks may be part of the answer. Some smugglers now bring “factory-to-you” prices to New York by picking up their dope in Colombia and eliminating middlemen. At the same time, a surge in trade between the U.S. and Mexico has made smuggling safer and cheaper by providing endless nooks and crannies among the billions of dollars’ worth of legitimate goods flowing over the border each year.

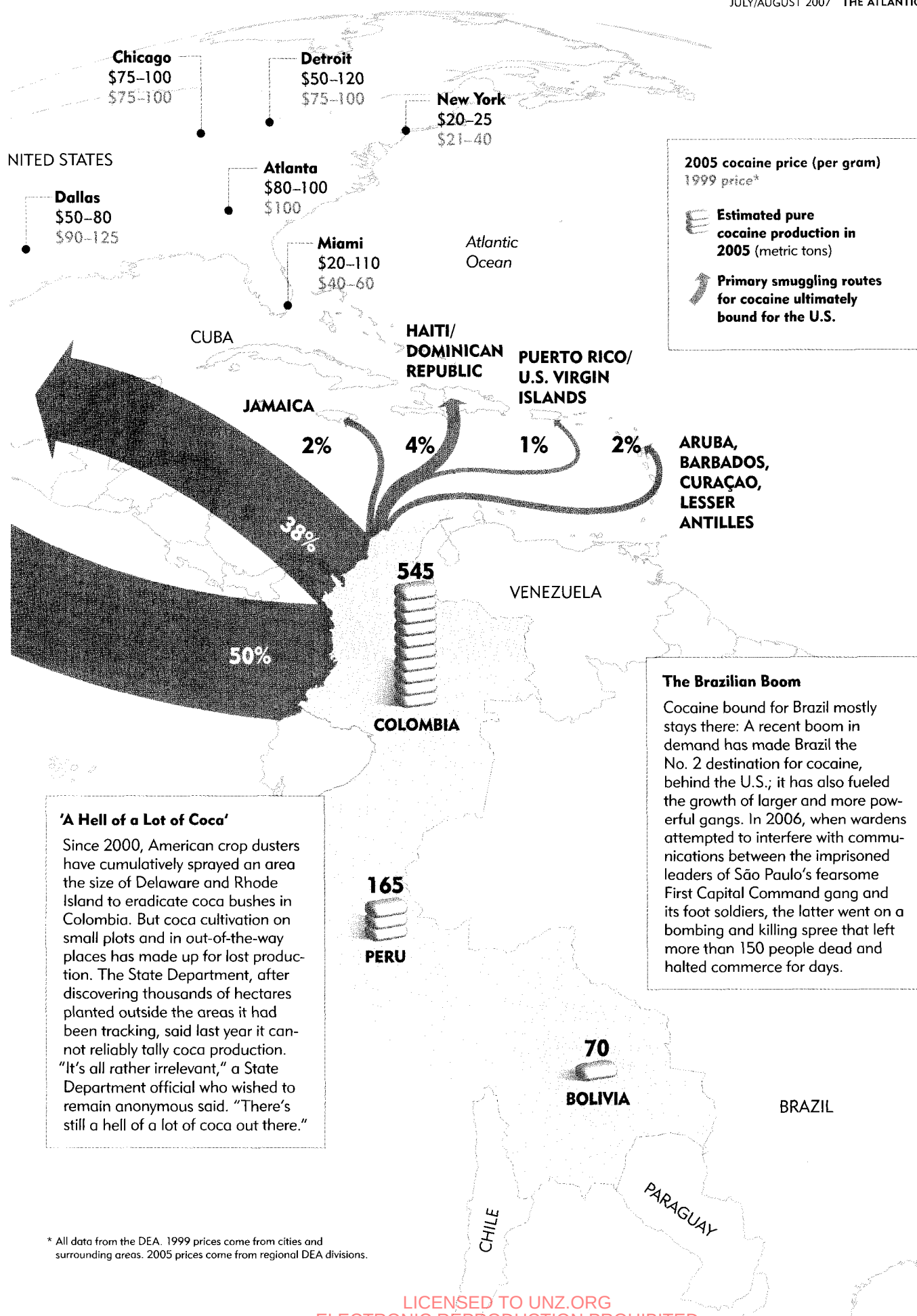
Inside the United States, retailers have reduced prices by cutting the take of street-corner vendors, some of whom now make less than the minimum wage. Ironically, aggressive imprisonment of drug offenders may contribute to this phenomenon: When convicts rotate out of prison, stigmatized by felony convictions and possessing no licit skills, they are sometimes willing to sell dope for less than they were earning before they went in. Sellers up and down the food chain also appear willing to work for less because the risks involved in selling cocaine have declined: Violence has trailed off since the 1980s crack boom ended, and since 2001, federal drug prosecutions have fallen 25 percent, as agents have been reassigned to chase terrorists.



Many experts say that if we can’t keep the price of cocaine out of reach for more people, some money would be better spent on rehabilitation of drug users, and on education. Sea changes in policy, such as decriminalization or legalization of drugs, look politically untenable. In fact, 37 years in, there is still little pressure to end the war on drugs, despite its high costs in blood and treasure: Since 1981, the United States has spent about as much on its “war” on all illicit drugs as it did on its real war in Vietnam—some \$600 billion to \$800 billion in today’s dollars. So far, victory has proven just as elusive. ■

Ken Dermota is a journalist in the Washington bureau of Agence France-Presse.

SOURCES: U.S. DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION; NATIONAL DRUG CONSUMPTION REPORT; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE; MAP BY RYAN MORRIS



* All data from the DEA. 1999 prices come from cities and surrounding areas. 2005 prices come from regional DEA divisions.





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PRIMARY SOURCES

TERRORISM

As Karachi Goes ...

In April, tens of thousands of Pakistanis protested in the streets of Karachi after an Islamic cleric, the head of one of the country's many madrasas (religious schools), called for the government to impose Islamic law throughout the country. According to a new report by the International Crisis Group on madrasas and violence in Pakistan's largest city, the protesters had reason to be worried. Since 9/11, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has repeatedly promised to crack down on the madrasas that train new generations of would-be jihadists, but his rhetoric has produced little action. Each promise has been "invariably followed by retreat," states the report, and five years after his government

launched the ambitious Madrasa Reform Project, the effort is "in shambles": Mosques and madrasas are training and exporting fighters to Afghanistan and Kashmir, illegally seizing land to expand their sway over urban neighborhoods, and calling for jihad and sectarian violence. In Karachi, which may be home to more than 1,000 madrasas, suicide attacks in 2006 killed a U.S. diplomat, the country's most prominent Shia political leader, and the entire leadership of a Sunni militant group. The report recommends that Musharraf follow through on his pledge to crack down on extremism, though it acknowledges the political risks: National elections are coming up this fall, and he depends on religious voters for much of his political support. But without meaningful change



THEY DON'T WANT Islamic law in Pakistan—but others do.

in the country's educational system, the report warns, "the madrasas and the violent extremism they encourage are likely to become even more powerful."

—"Pakistan: Karachi's Madrasas and Violent Extremism," International Crisis Group

PUBLIC HEALTH

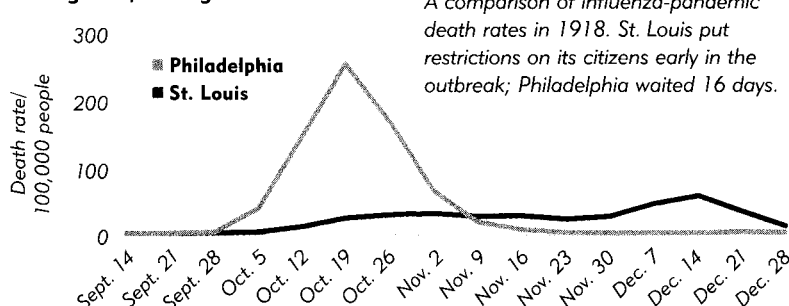
Preparing for the Worst

For avian-flu watchers, the pandemic of 1918 shows what a new outbreak could mean for the world, but a study published by the National Academy of Sciences suggests that it may also offer lessons on how to contain avian flu. The U.S. doesn't have enough vaccine to counter an outbreak, but the report argues that there's more to readiness than vaccine stockpiles. The authors looked at "nonpharmaceutical interventions"—closing schools and movie theaters, banning public gatherings, quarantining infected households—used in 17 U.S. cities in 1918, and found a strong correlation between

aggressive NPIs and lower transmission rates. Timing mattered, too: Cities that put multiple restrictions on their citizens early in the epidemic had peak death rates as much as 50 percent lower than cities that waited longer or never imposed any restrictions. The study also points out that cities that imposed NPIs suffered a second wave of infection once the restrictions were relaxed; had the restrictions been in place for more than eight weeks (the longest most cities imposed them), death rates might have been even lower.

—"Public Health Interventions and Epidemic Intensity During the 1918 Influenza Pandemic," R. Hatchett, C. Mecher, and M. Lipsitch, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

Acting Fast, Saving Lives



MEDICINE

Under Pressure

Happiness and sanity are an impossible combination, Mark Twain once remarked. Fortunately, a new study suggests, happiness and healthy blood pressure make better bedfellows. The authors, both economists, found a strong inverse correlation between reported rates of hypertension and well-being in 16 European countries. Nations whose citizens report the highest levels of satisfaction with their lives (Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden) also report the lowest incidence of high blood pressure, while countries with the lowest rates of happiness (Italy, Portugal, Germany) suffer elevated rates of high blood pressure. Nearly half the respondents in countries with the lowest hypertension rates pronounced themselves very satisfied with life, while less than a quarter of respondents in countries with the highest blood pressure said the same. The authors caution that they don't have a good explanation for the link between the two sets of data. But they argue that as governments look to develop policies that expand well-being rather than wealth, they should factor blood pressure into their calculations.

—"Hypertension and Happiness Across Nations," David G. Blanchflower and Andrew J. Oswald, National Bureau of Economic Research

RIZWAN TABASSUM/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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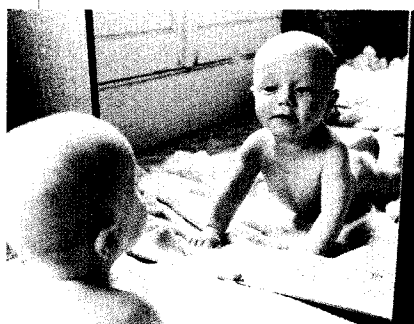


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MYSPACE, HERE he comes ...

SOCIETY Generation Me

Young people are generally full of themselves, but a new study suggests that today's kids are far more self-centered than preceding generations. A team of five university psychologists analyzed the results of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, a 40-question survey administered to 16,475 current and recent college students nationwide between 1982 and 2006; the test asked students to agree or disagree with statements like "I think I am a special person" and "If I ruled the world, it would be a better place." The results, the authors argue, illustrate a steady increase in narcissism—a "positive and inflated view of the self." Overall, almost two-thirds of the most recent sample display a higher level of narcissism than the 1982 average. Why the increase? The researchers speculate that technology may have something to do with it. Narcissism is especially acute among students born after 1982, the cohort most likely to use "self-focused" Web sites like MySpace and YouTube. Whatever the cause, the researchers argue that increased narcissism can have pernicious effects, on the individual and on society. They cite previous studies showing that narcissists have trouble forming meaningful relationships, tend to be materialistic, and are prone to higher levels of infidelity, substance abuse, and violence.

—"Egos Inflating Over Time: A Test of Two Generational Theories of Narcissism Using Cross-Temporal Meta-Analysis," Jean M. Twenge et al.

MEDIA

News You Can Use

Although we live in the information age, a new Pew Research Center study suggests that the American public is no better informed than it was before round-the-clock cable news and the Internet invaded our homes. After surveying more than 1,500 Americans to find out where they get their information and how much they know about current affairs, researchers concluded that Americans "are about as aware of major news events" as they have been for the last two decades. More people today know that the chief justice of the Supreme Court is conservative than did in 1989, for instance, but fewer know that the United States has a trade deficit. Half the country can identify Nancy Pelosi as the speaker of the House, whereas in 1989 just 14 percent could correctly identify Tom Foley as the speaker; on the other hand, Americans today have more trouble identifying the U.S. vice president and the Russian president

than they did in the era of Dan Quayle and Boris Yeltsin. The most knowledgeable Americans were those who got their news from the Web sites of major papers and those who watched programs like *The Colbert Report* or *The Daily Show*; they correctly answered 54 percent of the questions about current affairs, while regular viewers of local TV news and network morning shows got only about 35 percent right. The survey found that there isn't necessarily a trade-off between hard-news knowledge and pop-culture savvy: Respondents who demonstrated a "high" knowledge of politics and world events were also adept at identifying celebrities such as Beyoncé Knowles. And while it's hard to know which sources provide the best information, the report notes that well-informed people gather their news from an average of 7.0 sources—more than the average of 4.6.

—"Public Knowledge of Current Affairs Little Changed by News and Information Revolutions," Pew Research Center

What the Public Knows

Percent surveyed who know that ...

Democrats hold a majority in the House	76%
Hillary Clinton is running for president	73%
Rudy Giuliani is running for president	62%
Bush's "surge" added about 20,000 troops	61%
Roughly 3,000 U.S. troops have died in Iraq	55%
The new minimum wage would be \$7.25/hour	34%
Sunni and Shia are the main branches of Islam	32%

PSYCHOLOGY

Kids Tell the Darndest Lies

When it comes to catching a kid in a fib, teachers are among the savviest lie detectors, according to a recent study published in *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*. The researchers selected a group of preschoolers and left each of them seated alone in a room, asking them not to peek at a toy that was behind them, out of their view. The researchers videotaped their actions, then asked each child, "Did you peek?" The responses were shown to 64 adults selected from summer courses at Rutgers University, who were asked to determine whether each child was telling the truth. The adults' scores varied widely—they

were right 12 percent to 84 percent of the time—but their average score was just 41 percent; chance alone would have given them 50 percent. (Most adults, including parents, erred on the side of suspicion, believing some children were lying when they were being honest.) But one group of adults—those who work with children professionally, including teachers and child psychologists—routinely outperformed the rest of the sample. More than a third of the professionals detected the liars at least 60 percent of the time; only one nonprofessional was able to match that rate.

—"Adults' Ability to Detect Children's Lying," Angela M. Crossman and Michael Lewis, *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*



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PASSENGER. WE BELIEVE
THE WAY YOU FLY IS
JUST AS IMPORTANT
AS WHERE YOU FLY.
IT'S NOT SIMPLY
ABOUT GETTING
A SEAT, IT'S ABOUT
GETTING SERVICE.
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BUT A MEAL. NOT
JUST SOMETHING
TO WATCH BUT
SOMETHING WORTH
WATCHING. IN SHORT,
IT'S ABOUT UPGRADING
FLYING FOR EVERY
PASSENGER ON
EVERY PLANE. NOW
THERE'S AN IDE**A**



THE MILITARY

Till Combat Do Us Part

Both common sense and informal surveys of U.S. soldiers and their spouses have suggested that longer, more frequent deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, combined with the stress and uncertainty of combat, make military marriages more likely than ever to end in divorce. The Rand Corporation recently prepared a study for the Pentagon on the effect of divorce on military performance and retention rates, and the results challenge the conventional wisdom: The study finds no significant increase of divorce in the military during recent conflicts. Researchers examined personnel records for every member of the U.S. military serving between fiscal years

1996 and 2005 (more than 6 million people), and found, to their surprise, that while the divorce rate has risen steadily since the start of the war in 2001, it's still roughly the same as it was in 1996, when the military was under significantly less stress. So, can married soldiers breathe easier when they're parted from their spouses? The men can, but the study found that the risk of divorce for female service members, particularly enlisted women, is several times the risk for their male counterparts. Men, it seems, have a harder time waiting at home for the return of their soldier wives.

—"Families Under Stress: An Assessment of Data, Theory, and Research on Marriage and Divorce in the Military," Benjamin R. Karney and John S. Crown, Rand Corporation



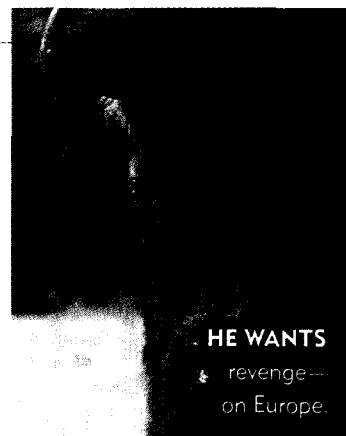
ECONOMICS

As the World Turns

It's a dictum of the dismal science: "When America sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold." But the International Monetary Fund's most recent *World Economic Outlook* suggests that may no longer be the case: While the U.S. remains a dominant force in the global marketplace, many countries, the report states, may be "decoupling" sufficiently from the American economy that they're gaining some protection from painful chain reactions. The IMF's researchers also suggest that America's disruptive impact may have been overstated: "Past episodes of highly synchronized growth declines across the globe"—like those created by the oil-price shocks of the mid-1970s, or the burst of the tech bubble in 2000—"were

not primarily the result of developments specific to the United States, but rather were caused by factors that affected many countries at the same time." The report notes that one reason the global economy continues to hum along, even as growth slows in the U.S., is that America's current sluggishness is driven by slumps in its housing and manufacturing sectors, which have a limited effect on other major industrial countries. Of course, it points out, given that America accounts for about a fifth of the world's economic activity—a percentage that has changed little in the past 30 years—its sneezes remain "relevant." But the rest of the world appears to be building a sturdier immune system.

—"World Economic Outlook: Spillovers and Cycles in the Global Economy," International Monetary Fund



HISTORY

They Shoot Bison, Don't They?

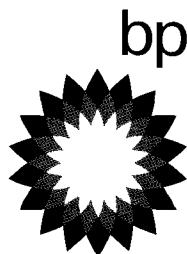
Early America was so thick with buffalo that explorers said the land seemed draped with "one black robe." By 1900, fewer than a hundred buffalo remained. But it was European demand, more than Manifest Destiny, that nearly drove the continent's most majestic native species to extinction, according to a paper by an economist from the University of Calgary. Until about 1870, the author argues, American hunters killed buffalo only in moderate numbers, usually for their meat and hides. But in 1871, English and German tanners figured out how to easily and cheaply turn buffalo hides into boot soles and machine belts, and, the author suggests, as European armies reequipped after the Franco-Prussian War, the profits suddenly available to hunters set off a decade-long buffalo bloodbath, during which most of the meat was left to rot on the prairie. America, still recovering from the Civil War, needed the money, so the government let the massacre continue—a reckless act that the paper likens to the tendency of today's developing countries to strip their land of natural resources to satisfy their trading partners in the developed world.

—"Buffalo Hunt: International Trade and the Virtual Extinction of the North American Bison," M. Scott Taylor, National Bureau of Economic Research

For links to the documents discussed in this section, visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200707/primarysources.

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POLL

SAUDI ARABIA'S RISE?

The Atlantic recently asked a group of foreign-policy authorities about Saudi Arabia and how it could shape the future of the Middle East.

SAUDI KING ABDULLAH speaks at the Arab League summit in Riyadh in March.

Q: What will Saudi Arabia's growing role as a regional leader mean for the Middle East?

55% Very little; the Sunni Arab states will prove ineffective as counterweights to Iran.

"Saudi Arabia lacks the population, unity, and appeal needed to lead the region or to contain Iran. Riyadh's strategy instead is essentially defensive: It will play both sides and try to keep the region's problems at bay."

"At the moment very little, but if Saudi Arabia really adopts a new outward look and plays its hand as effectively as it can, it could be a very useful counterweight to Iran without tipping into war."

"Saudi Arabia ... is incurably ineffective in everything except oil production. Its diplomacy has always been feckless."

23% The containment of Iranian influence throughout the Middle East

"Saudi Arabia, even if it succeeds in increasing its regional influence, will have little impact on developments in Iraq. It should, however, be somewhat more effective in countering Shiite radicalism in Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East."

"Remember, the great advantage the Saudis have (beyond money) in the region is that they are Arabs, the Iranians are Persians. This alone limits the power the Iranians have over the entire region and is a tremendous demographic asset for the Saudis."

16% Increased sectarian violence between Sunnis and Shia, particularly in Iraq

5% A heightened possibility of conventional war between Iran and the Sunni Arab states

2% The containment of Iranian influence in Iraq

Q: How friendly to U.S. interests will Saudi Arabia be over the next five years?

69% Friendly enough

"Saudi Arabia under King Abdullah is a very responsible and important nation. They remain better friends to the United States than we deserve."

"On some issues the Saudis will be very friendly (oil in particular), but will not always match U.S. interests with regard to the peace process, Iran, and terrorism—though they won't be truly adversarial."

"America's weakened position in the Middle East is forcing Saudi Arabia to hedge its bets. It needs to put distance between itself and Washington—witness King Abdullah's statement in March that the U.S. occupation of Iraq is illegal. But Riyadh has no illusions about what Iran's ascendancy means for the region—or why it has the United States as an ally. So the House of Saud won't venture too far from Washington's side."

"A conservative regime keen to save its own skin, and fearful of the same threats that confront U.S. interests (Iran, Shiite resurgence, terrorism), will be in alignment with the U.S. more often than not."

31% Not very friendly

"Saudi Arabia will be increasingly pressured by the Wahabi clerics and jihadists to provide more financial and political support [to opponents of] Israel and the U.S."

"Increasingly, the Saudis see the Bush administration (and the U.S. as a whole) as ... unable to get much done following the disaster in Iraq, the stalemate in the peace process, and the rise of Iran. It is precisely because of their [perceptions] of U.S. ineptitude that the Saudis are stepping up to the plate."

PARTICIPANTS (39): Kenneth Adelman, Graham Allison, Ronald Asmus, Samuel Berger, Daniel Blumenthal, Stephen Bosworth, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Daniel Byman, Warren Christopher, Wesley Clark, Richard Clarke, William Cohen, Ivo Daalder, Lawrence Eagleburger, Jay Garner, Leslie Gelb, Marc Grossman, Gary Hart, Bruce Hoffman, John Hulsman, Robert Hunter, Robert Kagan, David Kay, Andrew Krepinevich, Charles Kupchan, John Lehman, James Lindsay, Edward Luttwak, Richard Myers, William Nash, Joseph Nye, Carlos Pascual, Thomas Pickering, Kenneth Pollack, Joseph Ralston, Susan Rice, Wendy Sherman, James Steinberg, Anthony Zinni.

Because of rounding, percentages do not always total 100.

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SCIENCE

The unintended consequences of genetic screening for disease

Who's Your Daddy?

BY STEVE OLSON

A few months ago, I sat down at my desk to open a letter that could tell me whether my father was really my father. In fact, that letter could tell me whether the men going back 10 generations on my paternal side were the biological fathers of their children.

I wasn't caught up in some bizarre multigenerational paternity suit. A scientific officer at a genetic testing company knew that I was interested in genealogy, and he had offered to run my DNA through a sequencer. A few weeks earlier, I'd swished mouthwash inside my cheeks, sealed the mouthwash in a tube, and mailed the tube to the company.

My doughty Scandinavian ancestors passed the test. My DNA revealed no obvious instances where the man named on a birth certificate differed from the man who was my biological ancestor. But I was lucky. Many efforts to trace male ancestry using DNA terminate at what geneticists delicately call a "non-paternity event." According to Bennett Greenspan, whose company, Family Tree DNA, sponsors projects that attempt to link different families to common ancestors, "Any project that has more than 20 or 30 people in it is likely to have an *oops* in it."

The law of unintended consequences is about to catch up with the genetic-testing industry. Geneticists and physicians would like us all to have our DNA sequenced. That way we'll know about our genetic flaws, and this knowledge could let us take steps to prevent future health problems. But genetic tests can also identify the individuals from whom we got our DNA. Widespread genetic testing could reveal many uncomfortable details about what went on in our parents' and grandparents' bedrooms.

The problem would not loom so large if non-paternity were rare. But it isn't. When geneticists do large-scale studies of populations, they sometimes can't help but learn about the paternity of the research subjects. They rarely publish their findings, but the numbers are common knowledge within the genetics community. In graduate school, genetics students typically are taught that 5 to 15 percent of the men on birth certificates are not the biological fathers of their children. In other words, as many as one of every seven men who proudly carry their newborn children out of a hospital could be a cuckold.

Non-paternity rates appear to be substantially lower in some populations. The Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation, which is based in Salt Lake City, now has a genetic and genealogical database covering almost 100,000 volunteers, with an overrepresentation of people interested in genealogy. The non-paternity rate for a representative sample of its father-son pairs is less than 2 percent. But other reputed non-paternity rates are higher than the canonical numbers. One unpublished study of blood groups in a town in southeastern England indicated that 30 percent of the town's husbands could not have been the biological fathers of their children.

Even with a low non-paternity rate, the odds increase with each successive generation. Given an average non-paternity rate of 5 percent, the chance of such an event occurring over 10 generations exceeds 40 percent.

Most people can't look that far back on their family trees, but I can. Someone on the Olson side of my family once spent an inordinate amount of time tracing the family's male lineage. My relative's

genealogical research indicated that my father's father's father's father's father's father's father's father's father migrated from Finland to Norway in the middle of the 17th century. If that is the case, I have a particular connection to that man.

Men pass most of their Y chromosome down to their sons intact and unadulterated. I therefore have the same Y chromosome as my father, and his father, and so on. (In fact, all men living today have inherited the Y chromosome of a single man who lived about 50,000 years ago, probably in eastern Africa. But mutations have slowly changed the Y chromosome over many generations, which is why the Y chromosomes of Finns generally differ from those of Greeks. Nevertheless, over the course of 10 or even 100 generations, the changes typically are small and the heritage is clear.) The continuity of the Y chromosome is how we know that Thomas Jefferson almost certainly had children with his slave Sally Hemings: Her direct male descendants have the same Y chromosome as Jefferson's paternal uncle, who presumably had the same Y chromosome as Jefferson. (Similar tests can reveal whether sons and daughters are really descended from their mothers and grandmothers, though non-maternity is much rarer than non-paternity.)

My Y chromosome turned out to be as Finnish as sautéed reindeer—I almost certainly inherited it from that 17th-century Finnish émigré. But even if my Y chromosome had turned out to be suspiciously un-Finnish, I probably could have come up with a story to protect my legitimacy. I could have said that my Finnish ancestor was the descendant of a Mongolian invader, or the son of a trader from



Istanbul, or even a Spanish diplomat fallen on hard times (though in fact I know that he was a peasant farmer). I could have said that one of the men in my paternal lineage was adopted after his mother and father died. The imagination is a wonderful balm for bruised expectations.

But genetic tests don't lie, which means that our imaginations may be in for a workout. For example, groups of people in many parts of the world trace their lineage to particularly prominent male ancestors. In some cases, genetic tests reveal a kernel of truth behind these stories. Genghis Khan's Y chromosome really is widely distributed in Asia, for instance. Still, many of these stories have social rather than genealogical roots. "Many times we romanticize about the different groups that we have ancestry with," says Rick Kittles, a geneticist at the University of Chicago who founded the company African Ancestry. When Kittles has told clients that their genetic tests don't coincide with what they believe, a few, he says, have been shattered.

company. If I had, I doubt I would have agreed to the test. If my Y chromosome was not what I expected, would I tell other family members about it—including my teenaged son? Would I have been tempted to encourage my brother, then my male cousins through my father's brothers, then my male second cousins through my grandfather's brothers, and so on to be tested so that I could determine where the non-paternity occurred? I think we'd all have been better off assuming the best and shunning the test.

But the pressure to undergo genetic testing is about to increase. New technologies are reducing the cost of sequencing DNA. Researchers are now establishing extensive databases of DNA sequences combined with health information so they can link specific genes to diseases. And once the contributions of our genes to common diseases are discovered, everyone could benefit from DNA testing. Already, the Personal Genome Project at Harvard University is seeking volunteers who are willing to have their DNA sequences and medical information posted on the Web for biomedical purposes, even though the project

warns that a person's DNA could be used to "infer paternity or other features of the volunteer's genealogy."

Two of the men most responsible for the sequencing of the human genome—James Watson and Craig Venter—are making most of their genomes available on the Web. But if their sons ever decide to have their DNA tested, they could face the same situation I did in opening that letter. Watson has kept part of his genome private because he doesn't want his sons and the public to know whether he has a genetic variant predisposing him to Alzheimer's disease; he seems unconcerned about what the rest might reveal.

Genetic counselors have been struggling with the issue of non-paternity for years. When a child is born with a genetic disorder, the parents may go to a counselor to learn whether they should try to have more children. If tests reveal that the presumed father of the child is not the biological father, most counselors will tell only the mother. But a vocal minority insists that paternity should be known to all.

So far, the expense of these tests has limited their use to cases like the one above, where a serious genetic disorder is already apparent. But what will happen when people begin sequencing large parts of their DNA routinely, to see whether they are vulnerable to specific diseases? If you discovered a predisposition to heart attacks or prostate cancer, and medications could reduce your vulnerability, wouldn't you want to tell your siblings and cousins? And shouldn't they be tested, too? Yet in the absence of stringent and possibly unattainable privacy protections, widespread testing will lead to many unpleasant surprises.

Geneticists have only begun to think about how to protect people from knowing themselves too well. But they probably should have seen this problem coming a long time ago. An oft-quoted definition of their field is: "Genetics explains why you look like your father—and if you don't, why you should." ▀

Steve Olson's most recent book is *Count Down: Six Kids Vie for Glory at the World's Toughest Math Competition* (2004).

Frankly, I hadn't thought much about these issues before sitting down to open that letter from the genetic testing

RELIGION

America is becoming more secular; Europe is becoming more religious. Both trends could mean trouble.

Crises of Faith

BY ROSS DOUTHAT

Nothing divides the United States from Europe like religion. America has its public piety and its multitude of thriving sects, Europe has its official secularism and its empty, museum-piece churches. Ninety percent of Americans say they believe in God, while only about 60 percent of Britons, French, and Germans say the same. American politics is riven by faith-based disputes that barely exist across the Atlantic, while European

and sees a model for America to follow. In Europe, meanwhile, a rising Islam and a more assertive Christian remnant are touching off American-style culture wars on a continent that had prided itself on being past those messy controversies.

America's secular turn actually began in the 1990s, though it wasn't until 2002 that two Berkeley sociologists first noticed it. In a paper in the *American*

as it has in many other nations, institutionalized."

Five years later, that institutionalization seems to be proceeding. It's showing up in an increasingly secularized younger generation: A recent Pew Research Center survey found that 20 percent of 18-to-25-year-olds reported no religious affiliation, up from just 11 percent in the late 1980s. It's visible on the best-seller lists, where books such as Kevin Phillips's



debates take place under a canopy of unbelief that's unimaginable in the United States, where polls show that a Muslim or a homosexual has a better chance of being elected president than an acknowledged atheist.

The aftermath of 9/11 has thrown this contrast into sharp relief and seemingly pushed Europe and America into permanent, Venus-and-Mars opposition. But paradoxically, our era may be remembered as the moment when the religious gulf between the continents began to slowly close. In the United States, the Bush era has summoned up—arguably for the first time in this country's history—a mass secularism that looks to Europe

Sociological Review, Michael Hout and Claude S. Fischer announced the startling fact that the percentage of Americans who said they had “no religious preference” had doubled in less than 10 years, rising from 7 percent to 14 percent of the population. This unexpected spike wasn't the result of growing atheism, Hout and Fischer argued; rather, more Americans were distancing themselves from organized religion as “a symbolic statement” against the religious right. If the association of religiosity with political conservatism continued to gain strength, the sociologists suggested, “then liberals' alienation from organized religion [might] become,

American Theocracy make their pitches to liberal readers, and in the public comments of scientists who now seem eager to attack religion as a threat rather than dismiss it as a nuisance. And it's found a home in the expanding world of the liberal blogosphere, which has provided a virtual parish for Americans united by their disdain for “godbags” and “fundies.” (A Pew study of Howard Dean activists, one of the first mass constituencies mobilized by “netroots” activism, found that 38 percent described themselves as “secular.”)

It's even making a difference at the ballot box. Liberals have spent much of the past six years straining to cut into the

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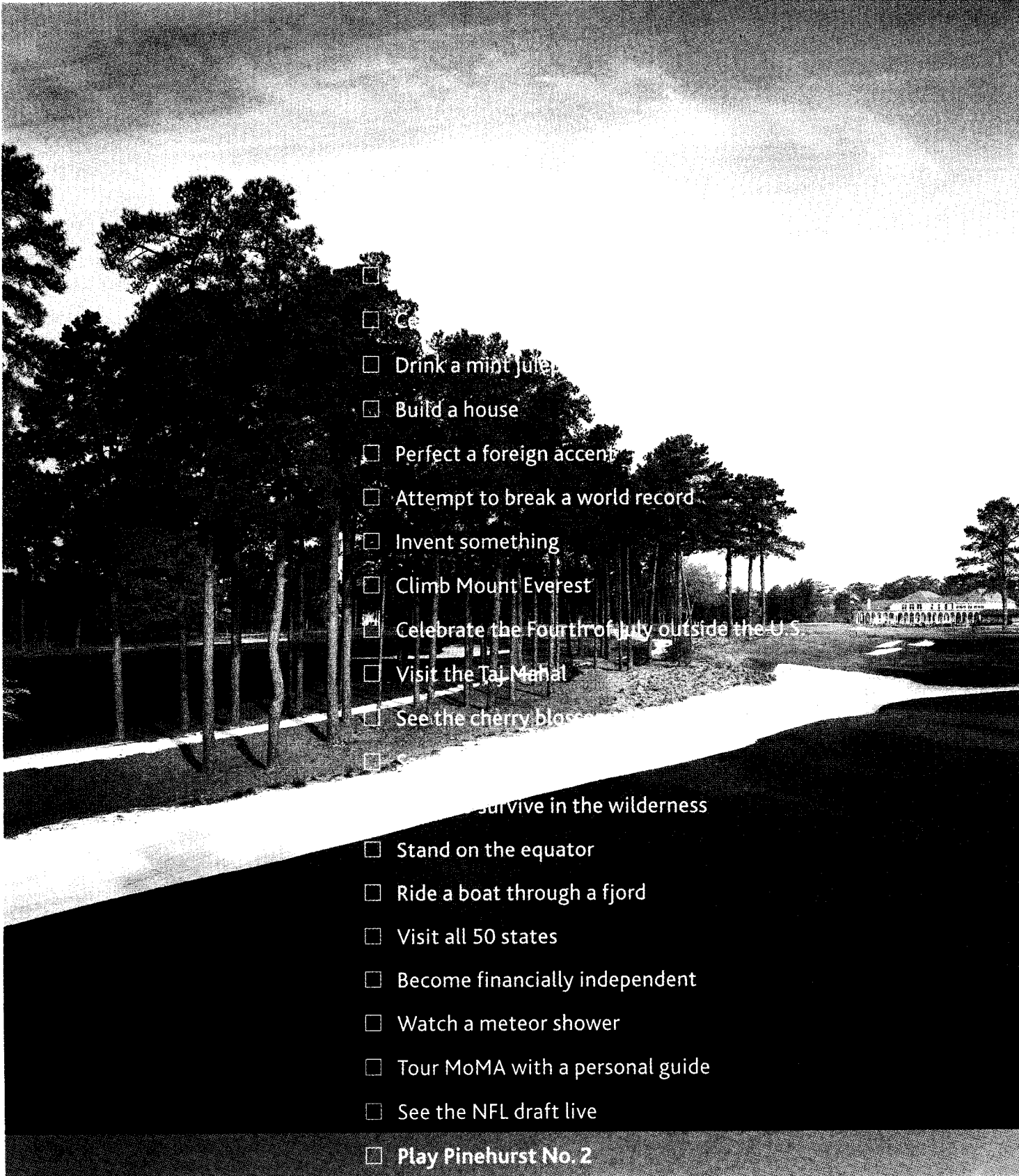


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GOP's advantage among religious voters. But when the Democrats finally shattered the Republican majority in the 2006 midterms, it was their consolidation of the *secular* vote that helped put them over the top. Despite all their efforts to close the God gap, the Democrats managed barely any gains among frequent churchgoers last November—but their share of the vote among Americans who never attend church at all leaped to 67 percent, from 55 percent in 2002.

This isn't the first secular moment in American history; indeed, the modern religious right emerged, in part, as a reaction to what was perceived as the growing Godlessness of America's political institutions, from the Supreme Court's decision banning school prayer to the disproportionate influence of secular voters in the Democratic Party of the 1970s. But that earlier secularism tended to be an elite phenomenon: Even *Time* magazine's famous 1966 cover story, "Is God Dead?," confined its analysis to the world of intellectuals, and noted that in America, "public faith in God seems to be as secure as it was in medieval France." The secularism that has come of age in the Bush era, by contrast, seems to have a greater mass appeal. What's more, where the earlier secularism tended to cultivate a self-conscious neutrality toward religion, the new secularism is defined by an unabashed hostility toward traditional faith—or at least toward any attempt to mix such faith with politics. The more-extreme secular voices regard religion as a virus or a poison; more-nuanced polemicists merely argue that their religious opponents are un-American, and that faith-based politics is a stalking horse for theocracy.

This hard secularism is a relatively radical idea in the American context, where the separation of church and state has rarely separated God from politics: From abolitionist and "Social Gospel" activism in the 19th century to the civil-rights and anti-abortion movements of the 20th, religiously motivated political action has been a regular feature of our national life. Indeed, the America that many secularists seem to desire looks an

awful lot like the Europe of today, where politicians who mention God are a rarity, and governments keep a wary eye on "sects" that stray too far outside the mainstream.

Yet the Europe of tomorrow may look more like ... the United States, with a politics that's increasingly shaped by clashes between believers, or between belief and unbelief. Already, the Continent is experiencing a low-grade culture war, created by the collision between the religious zeal of Muslim immigrants and the secular culture that surrounds them. In flash points that range from the murder of the anti-Islamic filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in Holland, to the controversy over the supposedly blasphemous Danish cartoons, to the question of whether to admit Turkey to the EU, secular Europe has found itself in unfamiliar, God-haunted, almost *American* territory. Such disputes may subside as Islamic immigrants assimilate to European norms, but for now, at least, resistance to assimilation by Muslims suggests that they may succeed in changing those norms as much as they are changed by them.

Meanwhile, there are signs that Christianity, too, is emerging from its decades-long defensive crouch. Pope Benedict XVI has taken the re-Christianization of Europe as a theme of his papacy, and his church's recent interventions in Spain's debate over same-sex unions and in Italy's referendum on whether to loosen restrictions on in vitro fertilization bear an unmistakable resemblance to the gauntlet-throwing that Americans have come to expect from their churchmen.

In each case, demography may be pushing religion back into European politics. The Muslim birthrate in Europe is far higher than the birthrate among non-Muslims, and immigration from the Islamic world continues apace. Meanwhile, immigrants from Africa and Latin America have injected a new vitality into European Christianity, creating thriving Evangelical and Pentecostal communities in urban areas where many of the established churches stand empty. It was Christians' demographic advantage in the ancient world, the sociologist Rodney

Stark has suggested, that helped their faith take over Europe in the first place, and high fertility rates help explain the growth of evangelical Christianity and Mormonism in the United States over the last century. Now similar demographic forces, the political scientist Eric Kaufmann argued last year in the British magazine *Prospect*, may be "carrying Europe towards a more American model of modernity," in which the wall of separation between church and state looks more like a picket fence, easily scaled or shimmied through.

These trends shouldn't be exaggerated. America remains a deeply religious nation and its secularists an embattled minority, while Europeans remain strongly invested in preventing faith from intruding into politics. But both continents may be drifting into a zone where religious belief is likely to be a persistent source of tension, rather than a commonplace or a curiosity.

Religion stirs up the most controversy, a group of Harvard economists recently argued, when roughly half the population is actively religious; conflict ebbs when the devout constitute large majorities or small minorities. The more evenly divided a culture finds itself on the ultimate questions, the more likely politicians are to pursue "strategic extremism" and mobilize one side against the other. Precisely this kind of polarization dominated European politics from the French Revolution until the middle of the 20th century, sparking regular clashes—Germany's *Kulturkampf*, France's Dreyfuss Affair, Spain's Civil War—between secular and religious ideologies.

America has long avoided this trap by enjoying near-universal piety; Europe, at least lately, has escaped it by cultivating near-universal skepticism. But if the religious gulf between the two continents narrows, the divides *within* each one are likely to open ever wider, and religious peace turn increasingly to culture war—or worse. ▀

Ross Douthat is an *Atlantic* associate editor and the author of *Privilege: Harvard and the Education of the Ruling Class* (2005).



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ANDREW SULLIVAN & THE DAILY DISH

On Politics

"It's healthy to have an actual debate about foreign policy and conservatism. And I don't buy Ross's idea that the fundamental divide is between realists and idealists. I think the last six years have opened up a deeper and more interesting debate between neoconservatism and paleoconservatism in foreign affairs, between internationalism and isolationism."

JAMES FALLOWS

On Asia

"India and China are so fundamentally different in so many ways that it is amazing that Americans often talk about them as a twinned pair. The Rising Asian Titans, The Billion-Strong Powers, the countries whose people will take our jobs, etc. They're similar only in the grossest ways ..."

MATTHEW YGLESIAS

The Liberal Voice

"Indeed, my sense is that conservatives mostly regarded Clinton's misconduct in this regard as a kind of synecdoche (or maybe metonymy—sorry, Mr. Glassman!) for a failed presidency."

ROSS DOUTHAT

The Conservative Voice

"My sense is that the only people who were all that surprised by the Monica Lewinsky scandal were Clintonista liberals who'd managed to convince themselves that everything we knew about Clinton's years as an Arkansas hound dog had been invented by David Brock."

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China

CHINA AND THE WESTERN WORLD

April 1896

BY LAFCADIO HEARN

Though China's political fate at the time seemed uncertain and its people set in traditional ways, Lafcadio Hearn—a Japan-based journalist known for his writings on East Asian culture—predicted that China would one day pose a formidable economic threat to the West.

The industrial competition of China would be incomparably more dangerous to Western civilization than that of any other nation ... They are adepts at combination, excellent financiers, shrewd and daring speculators. Though not yet rivals of Europeans in ... application of modern science to manufacture, they have given proof of ability to master that science ...

Here, however, there come up some doubts ... Will not the Chinaman of the year 2000 resemble in all things the familiar Chinaman of to-day? ...

But modern China is not to be judged by her ancient literature, but by her present life. Men who know China also know that Chinese conservatism does not extend to those activities which belong to trade, to industry, to commerce or speculation. It is a conservatism in beliefs, ethics, and customs, and has nothing to do with business.

Vol. 77, No. 462, pp. 450-464

A PLEA FOR THE RECOGNITION OF THE CHINESE REPUBLIC

January 1913

BY CHING CHUN WANG

About a year after revolutionaries had overthrown the Qing Dynasty and established a new government, Ching Chun Wang, a Chinese railway official and representative of the emergent republic, made a case for international recognition.

The Chinese millions have given the world the greatest revolution of modern times in the most civilized manner known to history. We have emancipated ourselves from the imperial yoke, not by brute force, but by sheer reasoning and unparalleled toleration. Within the amazingly short period of four months, and without shedding over one hundredth part of the blood that has been shed in other similar revolutions, we have transformed our immense country from an empire of four thousand years' standing into a modern democracy. After having set this new standard of sanity in revolutions, we have organized ourselves into the newest Republic, following up-to-date patterns. Now we come forward with hands and hearts open to join the sisterhood of nations, and all we ask is that the world will permit us to join its company ...

The recognition itself may not mean much, but at this critical moment, when China has the re-making of herself in

hand, and when not every nation is too glad to see China become strong and peaceful, every little help means a good deal. Indeed, a little help shown us to-day means a thousand times the value of the same help if it is shown us in a year to come. We need help and encouragement. We need help now.

Vol. 111, No. 1, pp. 42-45

IN CHINA, TOO

January 1923

BY PEARL S. BUCK

In 1923, Pearl S. Buck, an American-born writer who had been raised in China and continued to live and teach there with her husband, reflected on the social and cultural changes transforming China's young people. She went on to write many books, winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1932 for her novel The Good Earth, and the 1938 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Yesterday ... little Hsu Bao-ying came to visit me. I have known her since she was a mite, with a fat, solemn dumpling of a face ... Her parents are of the good old conservative type, not believing in overmuch book-knowledge for a girl, and with an eye to a good husband and mother-in-law for the child. An older married sister, advanced in views through a five years' residence in Shanghai, had teased them into sending Bao-ying to a boarding-school in the nearest city. When

the child left last for school, last autumn, she was a tractable, meek, sweet-faced little thing, rather frightened at the prospect of leaving home. She had the patient air which all little Chinese girls have who are enduring foot-binding. I had never heard her volunteer a remark, and in my presence she had always been particularly awed and reverential ...

Yesterday she came in a delicate blue satin of a more fashionable cut than I had ever seen; her feet were unbound and in little clumping, square, black-leather foreign shoes ...

I could not but comment on her unusual footwear.

'It is the very latest fashion,' she replied with great satisfaction. 'You know that, of course, in the big cities like Peking and Shanghai, the really fashionable girls do not bind their feet any more. At the boarding-school they don't either; and so, when I came home, I cried for three days, without food, until for peace they unbound my feet so that I might wear these beautiful American shoes. My feet are still too small, but I stuff cotton in the toes.'

Here was change, indeed! I fell back astounded in my chair. There she sat, slim, exquisite, and complacent, but no longer one to be condescended to, and not at all reverential.

Vol. 131, No. 1, pp. 68-72

CHINA EMERGENT

May 1942

BY MADAME CHIANG KAI-SHEK

In the midst of World War II, as China's Nationalist leader, Chiang Kai-shek, struggled against Japanese invaders from without and the Communist movement from within, his Wellesley College-educated wife decried the exploitation of China by the West and delineated a vision for a more democratic future.

We in China, though we have been harried for years by death and destruction, have been giving careful

thought toward the perfection of a political and social system that will ensure in the future the greatest good for the greatest number ...

We have chosen the path that we shall tread in the future. We are determined that there shall be no more exploitation of China. I have no wish to harp on old grievances, but realism demands that I should mention the ruthless and shameless exploitation of our country by the West in the past and the hard-dying illusion that the best way to win our hearts was to kick us in the ribs. Such asinine stupidities must never be repeated, as much for your own sake as for ours. America and Britain have already shown their consciousness of error by voluntarily offering to abrogate the iniquitous system of extraterritoriality that denied China her inherent right to equality with other nations.

While as a nation we are resolved that we will not tolerate foreign exploitation, we are equally determined that within our country there be no exploitation of any section of society by any other section or even by the state itself. The possession of wealth does not confer upon the wealthy the right to take unfair advantage of the less fortunate. But neither, as a nation, does China believe in communism or wish to obtain it in our land.

Vol. 169, No. 5, pp. 533-537

IN CHINA

March 1979

BY ARTHUR MILLER

After a 1978 visit to China, the renowned playwright Arthur Miller shared his impressions of the country, taking note of its cultural isolation.

It was still early in our Chinese voyage and I did not yet know what I would know soon: Chinese, like the French, have little interest in traveling abroad since their country is the center

of the world. It is always drought, flood, famine, some desperate circumstance that sends them out of China, rarely curiosity.

I asked Chiao Yu [a Chinese poet and playwright], "Do you get to see much foreign literature?"

"Yes, a little."

"Any American?"

"We have one book in the Writers Union translated from America."

"Which is that?"

"*Jonathan Seagull*. But so far it is only available to Union members, not the public."

"That's the only recent American book translated?"

"I have also read *Love Story*. What do you think of those books?"

It was impossible to tell from his expression whether he wanted a compliment on the Chinese having translated these books or a confirmation of his own low opinion of them.

"They're all right," I said, "but we have better ones." He nodded, still neutrally. "Why were those books selected for translation, do you know?"

"Because they were so popular. It was thought that they would help us to understand the Americans."

"Ah ..."

I was astounded by the ignorance of this writer facing me across the soda pop and the apples and candy on this lovely afternoon, until an old joke about the English passed through my mind, the one about the London headline: "Dense Fog—Continent Isolated." How many Chinese writers did I know, free as I was to read anything? And had he not a better right than I to provincial sequestration when there were going on one billion Chinese, a quarter of the human race, while there were only two hundred million or so Americans? In fact, he had more compatriots than the populations of Europe, Russia, and half of India combined. Who was the provincial?

I thought about this a long time and decided that he was.

Vol. 243, No. 3, pp. 90-117



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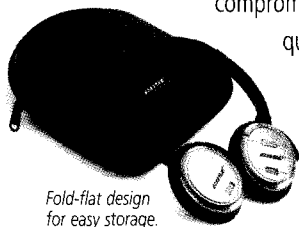


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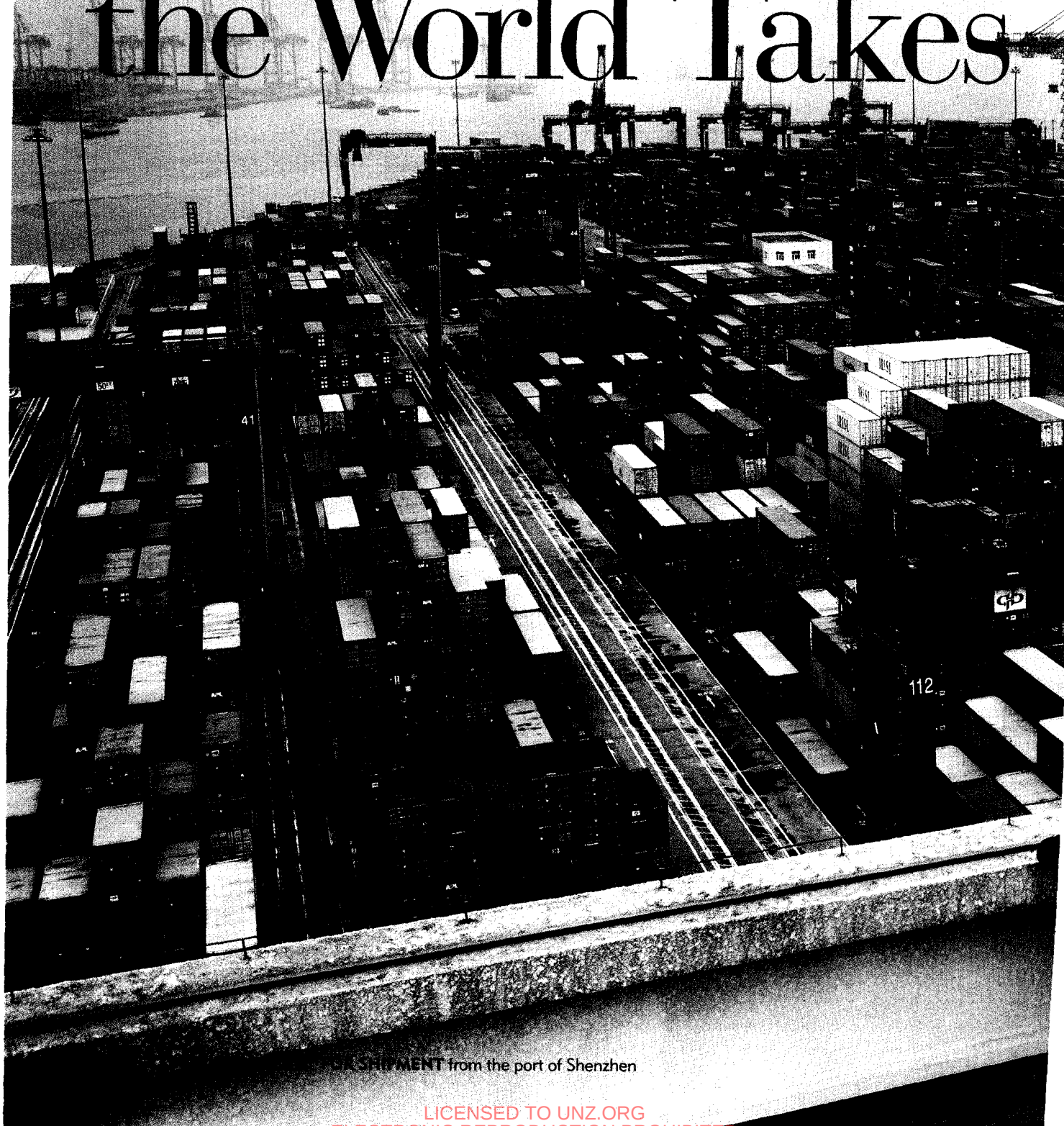
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China Makes, the World Takes



SHIPMENT from the port of Shenzhen

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A look inside the world's
manufacturing center shows
that America should welcome
China's rise—for now.

BY JAMES FALLOWS

Photographs by Michael Christopher Brown

Half the time I have spent in China I have spent in factories. At least that's how it feels—and it's a feeling I sought. The factories where more than 100 million Chinese men and women toil, and from which cameras, clothes, and every other sort of ware flow out to the world, are to me the most startling and intense aspect of today's China. For now, they are also the most important. ¶ They are startling above all in their scale. I was prepared for the skyline of Shanghai and its 240-mph Maglev train to the airport, and for the non-stop construction, dust, and bustle of Beijing. Every account of modern China mentions them. But I had no concept of the sweep of what has »

become the world's manufacturing center: the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong province (the old Canton region), just north of Hong Kong. That one province might have a manufacturing workforce larger than America's. Statistics from China are largely guesses, but Guangdong's population is around 90 million. If even one-fifth of its people hold manufacturing jobs, as seems likely in big cities, that would be 18 million—versus 14 million in the entire United States.

One facility in Guangdong province, the famous Foxconn works, sits in the middle of a conurbation just outside Shenzhen, where it occupies roughly as much space as a major airport. Some 240,000 people (the number I heard most often; estimates range between 200,000 and 300,000) work on its assembly lines, sleep in its dormitories, and eat in its company cafeterias. I was told that Foxconn's caterers kill 3,000 pigs each day to feed its employees. The number would make sense—it's one pig per 80 people, in a country where pigs are relatively small and pork is a staple meat (I heard no estimate for chickens).

MORE BY JAMES FALLOW
ON THEATLANTIC.COM
Read his online posts from China at
jamesfallows.theatlantic.com/.

From the major ports serving the area, Hong Kong and Shenzhen harbors, cargo ships left last year carrying the equivalent of more than 40 million of the standard

20-foot-long metal containers that end up on trucks or railroad cars. That's one per second, round the clock and year-round—and it's less than half of China's export total. What's in the containers that come back from America? My guess was, "dollars"; in fact, the two leading ship-borne exports from the United States to China, by volume, are scrap paper and scrap metal, for recycling.

And the factories are important, for China and everyone else. Someday China may matter internationally mainly for the nature of its political system or for its strategic ambitions. Those are significant even now, of course, but China's success in manufacturing is what has determined its place in the world. Most of what has been good about China over the past generation has come directly or indirectly from its factories. The country has public money with which to build roads, houses, and schools—especially roads. The vast population in the countryside has what their forebears acutely lacked, and peasants elsewhere today still do: a chance at paying jobs, which means a chance to escape rural poverty. Americans complain about cheap junk pouring out of Chinese mills, but they rely on China for a lot that is not junk, and whose cheap price is important to American industrial and domestic life. Modern consumer culture rests on the assumption that the nicest, most advanced goods—computers, audio systems, wall-sized TVs—will get cheaper year by year. Moore's Law, which in one version says that the price of computing power will be cut in half every 18 months or so, is part of the reason, but China's factories are a big part too.

Much of what is threatening about today's China also comes from its factories. Many people inside China, and nearly everyone outside, can avoid the direct effects of the country's political controls. It is much harder to avoid its pollution. The air in Chinese cities is worse than I expected, and because the pollution affects so many people in such a wide range of places, it is more damaging than London's, Manchester's, or Pittsburgh's in their worst, rapidly industrializing days. The air pollution comes directly from the steel works, cement plants, and other heavy-industry facilities that are helping the country prosper, and indirectly from the electric power plants that keep everything running. (Plus more and more cars, though China still has barely one-thirtieth as many per capita as the United States.) The sheer speed and volume with which factories and power plants across China increase their output of soot and gases make the country's air-pollution problems the world's. The heightened competition for oil, ore, and other commodities to feed the factories affects other nations, as do slapdash standards of food purity and safety, which may have led to tainted worldwide supplies of animal food. The ultimate fear in the developed world, of course, is that as China creates millions of new factory jobs unknown millions will lose such jobs in America, Canada, Germany, even Japan.

But these factories are both surprising and important in a less obvious, though also fundamental, way. Almost nothing about the way they work corresponds to the way they are discussed in the United States. America's political debates about the "China opportunity" and, even more, the "China threat" seem distant, theoretical, and imprecise from the perspective of the factories where the outsourcing and exporting occur. The industrialists from the United States, Europe, or Japan who are deciding how much of their production to move to China talk about the process in very different terms from those used in American political discussion. One illustration: The artificially low value of China's currency, relative to the dollar, comes near the top of American complaints about Chinese trade policy. (The currency is the yuan renminbi—literally, "people's money"—or RMB). This is more like the eighth or tenth issue that comes up when business officials discuss the factories they are opening in one country and closing in another. And when it does come up, the context is usually whether the RMB's rise will force a company to put its next factory not in China's crowded coastal region but someplace with even lower costs, like the remote interior provinces, where salaries are lower and commercial space is cheaper—or perhaps Vietnam or Cambodia.

So too with complaints about Chinese government subsidies for exporting industries, widespread abuse of intellectual property, and even "slave labor" inside the vast factories. Some of these complaints are well-founded, others are not; but even if all were true, they would



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misdescribe and undervalue what is going on here. Talking about Chinese industrial growth, Americans are in the position of 19th-century Europeans who acted as if America's industrial rise could be explained simply by its vast natural resources and its exploitation of immigrant and slave labor, plus its very casual attitude toward copyright and patent laws protecting foreign, mainly British, books and inventions. (Today, Americans walk the streets of China and see their movies, music, software, and books sold everywhere in cheap pirate versions. A century and a half ago, Charles Dickens walked the streets of young America and fumed to see his novels in cheap pirate versions.) All those factors played their part, but they were not the full story of America's rise—nor do the corresponding aspects of modern China's behavior fully explain what China has achieved.

I can't pretend to know the complete story of China's industrial rise. But I can describe what I have seen, and the main way it has changed my mind.

Large-scale shifts in economic power have effects beyond the purely economic. Americans need not be hostile toward China's rise, but they should be wary about its

when the flight crews gather in the wardroom to discuss the mission on which they're about to embark.

The morning crowd at the Four Points has that same sort of anticipatory buzz. Shenzhen, which is the part of China immediately north of Hong Kong and its "New Territories," did not exist as a city as recently as Ronald Reagan's time in the White House. It was a fishing town of 70,000 to 80,000 people, practically unnoticeable by Chinese standards. Today's other big coastal manufacturing centers, such as Xiamen, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, and Shanghai, were for centuries consequential Chinese cities. Not Shenzhen. Its population has grown at least a hundredfold in the past 25 years—rather than merely tripled or quadrupled, as in other cities. It is roughly as populous as New York, like many Chinese cities I keep coming across. Shenzhen has scores of skyscrapers and many, many hundreds of factories.

The story of Shenzhen's boom is in a sense the first chapter in modern China's industrialization. "During the founding period, Shenzhen people were bold and resolute in smashing the trammels of the old ideas," says the English version of the city's history, as recounted in Shenzhen's

America's political debates about the "China opportunity" and the "China threat" seem distant, theoretical, and imprecise from the perspective of the factories.

eventual effects. The United States is the only nation with the scale and power to try to set the terms of its interaction with China rather than just succumb. So starting now, Americans need to consider the economic, environmental, political, and social goals they care about defending as Chinese influence grows.

The consideration might best start from the point about which I've changed my mind: So far, America's economic relationship with China has been successful and beneficial—and beneficial for both sides. Free trade may not always be good for all participants, and in the long run trade with China may hold perils for the United States. But based on what I have seen in China, and contrary to what I expected before I came, so far it is working as advertised. Before thinking about what should be changed, Americans should appreciate what has gone right. A good place to begin that story is Shenzhen.

HOW IT WORKS: THE VIEW FROM THE FOUR POINTS

Each time I went to breakfast at the Sheraton Four Points in Shenzhen, I felt as if I were in a movie. I had a specific scene in mind: the moments aboard a U.S. aircraft carrier in a typical World War II movie

municipal museum in an odd, modern-Chinese combination of Maoist bombast and supercapitalist perspective. "With the market-oriented reforms as the breakthrough point, they shook off the yoke of the planned economy, and gradually built up new management systems."

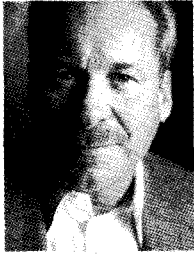
What all this refers to is the establishment, in the late summer of 1980, of Shenzhen as a "special economic zone," where few limits or controls would apply and businesses from around the world would be invited to set up shop. Shenzhen was attractive as an experimental locale, not just because it was so close to Hong Kong, with its efficient harbor and airport, but also because it was so far from Beijing. If the experiment went wrong, the consequences could be more easily contained in this southern extremity of the country. Nearly every rule that might restrict business development was changed or removed in Shenzhen. Several free-trade processing zones were established, where materials and machinery coming in and exports going out would be exempt from the usual duties or taxes.

Modern Shenzhen has traits that Americans would associate with a booming Sun Belt city—transient, rough, unmannered, full of opportunity—and that characterized Manchester, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles at their times of fastest growth. Newspapers that cover Shenzhen

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are full of stories of drugs, crime, and vice in the most crowded tenement areas, where walls and sidewalks are covered with spray-painted phone numbers. Some are for prostitutes, but many are for vendors who can provide fake documents—health certificates, diplomas, residence credentials—for those seeking work.

The Sheraton Four Points is part of the process that keeps Shenzhen growing. It is one of the places foreigners go when they are ready to buy from China.

The foreigners in their 30s through 50s who come to Shanghai are often financiers, consultants, or lawyers. They tend to be lean, with good suits and haircuts. Those in Beijing are often diplomats, academics, or from foundations or NGOs. They look a little less polished. The scene in and around Shenzhen is different. It is an international group—Americans, Taiwanese, Europeans, Japanese—of a single class. Virtually all of them are designers, engineers, or buyers from foreign companies who have come to meet with Chinese factory owners. The Americans in the group tend to be beefier than the Shanghai-Beijing crowd, and more Midwestern-looking. Some wear company shirts or nylon jackets with their company's logo on the pocket.

When the Four Points restaurant opens at 6:30 in the morning, foreigners begin assembling for breakfast, the meal when people most crave their native cuisine. It is laid out for all comers on a huge buffet: for the Europeans, sliced meats and cheese, good breads, strong coffee, muesli and yogurt. For the Japanese, pickles, sushi, cold noodles, smoked eel over rice. For the Taiwanese and other Chinese, steamed buns, dim sum, hot congee cereal. For the Americans, the makings of a Denny's-style "Slam" breakfast: thick waffles, eggs, hash-brown potatoes, sausage and bacon and ham. My wife finally accused me of spending so much time in Shenzhen just for the breakfasts.

The room is noisy, as people discuss their plans for the day or meet the Chinese factory officials who will conduct them on their tours. The room empties dramatically by nine o'clock, as people go out to meet their drivers and vans, and the day's factory touring and contract signing begin. As best I could tell from chatting with fellow guests, in all my trips to the Four Points, I was the only person there not on a buying mission.

Nearly every morning one man, a 41-year-old Irish bachelor, sits at the same table at the Four Points. Very late in the evening, he is at that table for dinner too. The table is near the entrance, from which the rest of the room can be surveyed. On a typical night, the company he owns will have 10 to 15 rooms booked at the hotel, for foreign visitors coming to do business with him. Often a few will join him for dinner. When the waiters see this man coming, they bring the plain Western food—meat, potatoes—they know he's interested in. "Do you have the same thing every night?" I asked him when I saw the waiters' reflexive response to his arrival. "I didn't come here for the food," he replied.

This man has lived in an apartment at the Four Points for the last two years, and in other hotels around Shenzhen for the previous eight. He makes a point of telling people that he does not speak Chinese—most business visitors who try, he says, have to work so hard to cope with the language that they forget what they're negotiating about. But at useful points in meetings he drops in Chinese colloquialisms so that people must wonder whether in fact he has understood everything that has been said. (He tells me he hasn't.) His name is Liam Casey, and I have come to think of him as "Mr. China."

"Mr. China" is an established jokey honorific, like *People* magazine's "Sexiest Man Alive—2003." Since the days of Marco Polo, successive foreigners have competed informally for recognition as the person who *really* understands the country and can make things happen here. The hilarious 2005 memoir *Mr. China*, by Tim Clissold, describes the heartbreak and frustration of a young British financier who thought he could figure out the secrets of success in China when it was first opening up to Western commerce.

Liam Casey has succeeded where Tim Clissold was frustrated, but he is careful not to sound overconfident. "Just when you think you know what's happening here, that's when you're in danger," he says. "You see some new product on the market, and you wonder where it was made—and it turns out to be a factory you drove by every day for five years and never knew what was going on inside! You can be here so long and know so little." But for my purposes he is Mr. China, because he is at the center of the overlapping flows of humanity bringing the world's work to China.

When not dining or sleeping at the Four Points, Casey runs a company he owns outright, with 800 employees (50 of them are from Ireland, America, or one of a dozen other nations; the rest are Chinese) and sales last year of about \$125 million. He is of medium height and fit-seeming in a compact way, with thick dark hair and a long face that generally has an impish expression. He has a strong Irish accent and dresses informally. He walks, talks, and moves so fast that I was generally scrambling to keep up.

Casey grew up on a farm outside Cork, had no formal education after high school, and first worked as a salesman in garment shops in Cork and then Dublin. He got involved in buying garments from Europe, with a friend set up a Crate & Barrel-style store in Ireland, then decided to travel. At age 29 he arrived in Southern California and worked briefly for a trading company. He says he would be in America still—"Laguna, Newport Beach, ah, I luvved it"—but he could not get a green card or long-term work permit, and didn't want to try to stay there under the radar.

(I might as well say this in every article I write from overseas: The easier America makes it for talented foreigners to work and study there, the richer, more powerful,



MR. CHINA: Liam Casey stands beside workers assembling laptop computers.

and more respected America will be. America's ability to absorb the world's talent is the crucial advantage no other culture can match—as long as America doesn't forfeit this advantage with visa rules written mainly out of fear.)

So in 1996, just after he turned 30, Casey went to Taipei for an electronics trade show. It was his first trip to Asia, and, he says, "I could see this is where the opportunity was." Within a year, he had set up operations in the Shenzhen area and started the company now known as PCH China Solutions. The initials stand for Pacific Coast Highway, in honor of his happy Southern California days.

What does this company do? The short answer is outsourcing, which in effect means matching foreign companies that want to sell products with Chinese suppliers who can make those products for them. Casey describes his mission as "helping innovators leverage the manufacturing supply chain here in China." To see how this works, consider the great human flows that now converge in southern China, which companies like Casey's help mediate.

One is the enormous flow of people, mainly young and unschooled, from China's farms and villages to Shenzhen and similar cities. Some arrive with a factory job already arranged by relatives or fixers; some come to the cities and then look for work. In the movie version of *Balsac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*, two teenaged men from the city befriend a young woman in the mountain village where they have been sent for rustication during the

Cultural Revolution. One day the young woman unexpectedly leaves. She has gone to "try her luck in a big city," her grandfather tells them. "She said she wanted a new life." The new life is in Shenzhen.

Multiplied millions of times, and perhaps lacking the specific drama of the *Balsac* tale, this is the story of the factory towns. As in the novel, many of the migrants are young women. In the light-manufacturing operations I have seen in the Pearl River Delta and around Shanghai, the workforce is predominantly female. Signing on with a factory essentially means making your job your life. Workers who come to the big coastal factory centers either arrive, like the little seamstress, before they have a spouse or children, or leave their dependents at home with grandparents, aunts, or uncles. At the electronics and household-goods factories, including many I've seen, the pay is between 900 and 1,200 RMB per month, or about \$115 to \$155. In the villages the workers left, a farm family's cash earnings might be a few thousand RMB per year. Pay is generally lowest, and discipline toughest, at factories owned and managed by Taiwanese or mainland Chinese companies. The gigantic Foxconn (run by its founder, Terry Guo of Taiwan) is known for a militaristic organization and approach. Jobs with Western firms are the cushiest but are also rare, since the big European and American companies buy mainly from local subcontractors. Casey says that monthly pay in some factories he



WORKERS at an Inventec factory in Shanghai check computer motherboards.

owns is several hundred RMB more than the local average. His goal is to retain workers for longer than the standard few-year stint, allowing them to develop greater skills and a sense of company spirit.

A factory work shift is typically 12 hours, usually with two breaks for meals (subsidized or free), six or seven days per week. Whenever the action lets up—if the assembly line is down for some reason, if a worker has spare time at a meal break—many people place their heads down on the table in front of them and appear to fall asleep instantly. Chinese law says that the standard workweek is 40 hours, so this means a lot of overtime, which is included in the pay rates above. Since their home village may be several days' travel by train and bus, workers from the hinterland usually go back only once a year. They all go at the same time—during the “Spring Festival,” or Chinese New Year, when ports and factories effectively close for a week or so and the nation's transport system is choked. “The people here work hard,” an American manager in a U.S.-owned plant told me. “They're young. They're quick. There's none of this ‘I have to go pick up the kids’ nonsense you get in the States.”

At every electronics factory I've seen, each person on an assembly line has a bunch of documents posted by her workstation: her photo, name, and employee number,

often the instructions she is to follow in both English and Chinese. Often too there's a visible sign of how well she's doing. For the production line as a whole there are hourly totals of target and actual production, plus allowable and actual defect levels. At several Taiwanese-owned factories I've seen, the indicator of individual performance is a childish outline drawing of a tree with leaves. After each day's shift one of the tree's leaves is filled in with a colored marker, either red or green. If the leaf is green, the worker has met her quota and caused no problems. If it's red, a defect has been traced back to her workstation. One red leaf per month is within tolerance; two is a problem.

As in all previous great waves of industrialization, many people end up staying in town; that's why Shenzhen has grown so large. But more than was the case during America's or England's booms in factory work, many rural people, especially the young women, work for two or three years and then go back to the country with their savings. In their village they open a shop, marry a local man and start a family, buy land, or use their earnings to help the relatives still at home.

Life in the factories is obviously hard, and in the heavy-industry works it is very dangerous. In the same week that 32 people were murdered at Virginia Tech, 32 Chinese workers at a steel plant in the north were scalded



to death when a ladleful of molten steel was accidentally dumped on them. Even in Chinese papers, that story got less play than the U.S. shooting—and fatal coal-mine disasters are so common that they are reported as if they were traffic deaths. By comparison, the light industries that typify southern China are tedious but less overtly hazardous. As the foreman of a Taiwanese electronics factory put it to me when I asked him about rough working conditions, “Have you ever seen a Chinese farm?” An American industrial designer who works in China told me about a U.S. academic who toured his factory and was horrified to see young female workers chained to their stations. What she saw was actually the grounding wire that is mandatory in most electronics plants. Each person on the assembly line has a Velcro band around her wrist, which is connected to the worktable to avoid a static-electricity buildup that could destroy computer chips.

That so many people are in motion gives Shenzhen and surrounding areas a rootless, transient quality. The natural language of southern China is Cantonese, but in the factory cities the lingua franca is Mandarin, the language that people from different parts of China are likeliest to share. “I don’t like it here,” a Chinese manager originally from Beijing told me, three years into a work assignment to Shenzhen. “There are no roots or culture.” “For the first few weeks I was here, I thought it was soulless,”

Liam Casey says of the town that has been his home for 10 years. “But like any fast-moving place, the activity *is* the character. It’s like New York. You arrive at the airport and go downtown, and when you get out of that cab, no one knows where you came from. You could have been there one hour, you could have been there 10 years—no one can tell. It’s similar here, which makes it exciting.” Casey told me that, to him, Shanghai felt slow “and made for tourists.” Indeed, I am regularly surprised to find that people stroll rather than stride along the sidewalks of Shanghai: It’s a busy city with slow pedestrians. Or maybe Casey’s outlook is contagious.

Another great flow into Shenzhen and similar cities is of entrepreneurs who have come and set up factories. The point of the Shenzhen liberalizations was less to foster any one industry than to make it easy for businesses in general to get a start.

Many entrepreneurs attracted by the offer came from Taiwan, whose economy is characterized by small, mainly family-owned firms like those that now abound in southern China. Overall, mainland China’s development model is closer to Taiwan’s than to Japan’s or Korea’s. In all these countries and throughout East Asia, governments use many tools to maximize industrial output: tax policy, trading rules, currency values, and so on. But Japanese and Korean policy has tended to emphasize the welfare of

large, national-champion firms—Mitsubishi and Toyota, Lucky Gold Star and Samsung—whereas Taiwan's exporters have been thousands of small firms, a few of which grew large. China is, of course, vaster than the other countries combined, but its export-oriented companies are small. One reason for the atomization is pervasive mistrust and corruption, plus a shaky rule of law. Even Foxconn, China's largest exporter, was only No. 206 on last year's Fortune Global 500 list of the biggest companies in the world. When foreigners have trouble entering the Japanese or Korean markets, it is often because they run up against barriers protecting big, well-known local interests. The problem in China is typically the opposite: Foreigners don't know where to start or whom to deal with in the chaos of small, indistinguishable firms.

One last flow coming into Shenzhen, which makes the other flows possible, is represented by the people at the Four Points: buyers from high-wage countries who have decided that they want to take advantage of, rather than compete with, low-cost Chinese manufacturers. This is where our Mr. China, and others like him, fit in.

This is also where a veil falls. In decades of reporting on military matters, I have rarely encountered people as concerned about keeping secrets as the buyers and suppliers who meet in Shenzhen and similar cities. What information are they committed to protect? Names, places, and product numbers that would reveal which Western companies obtain which exact products from which Chinese suppliers. There are high- and low-road reasons for their concern.



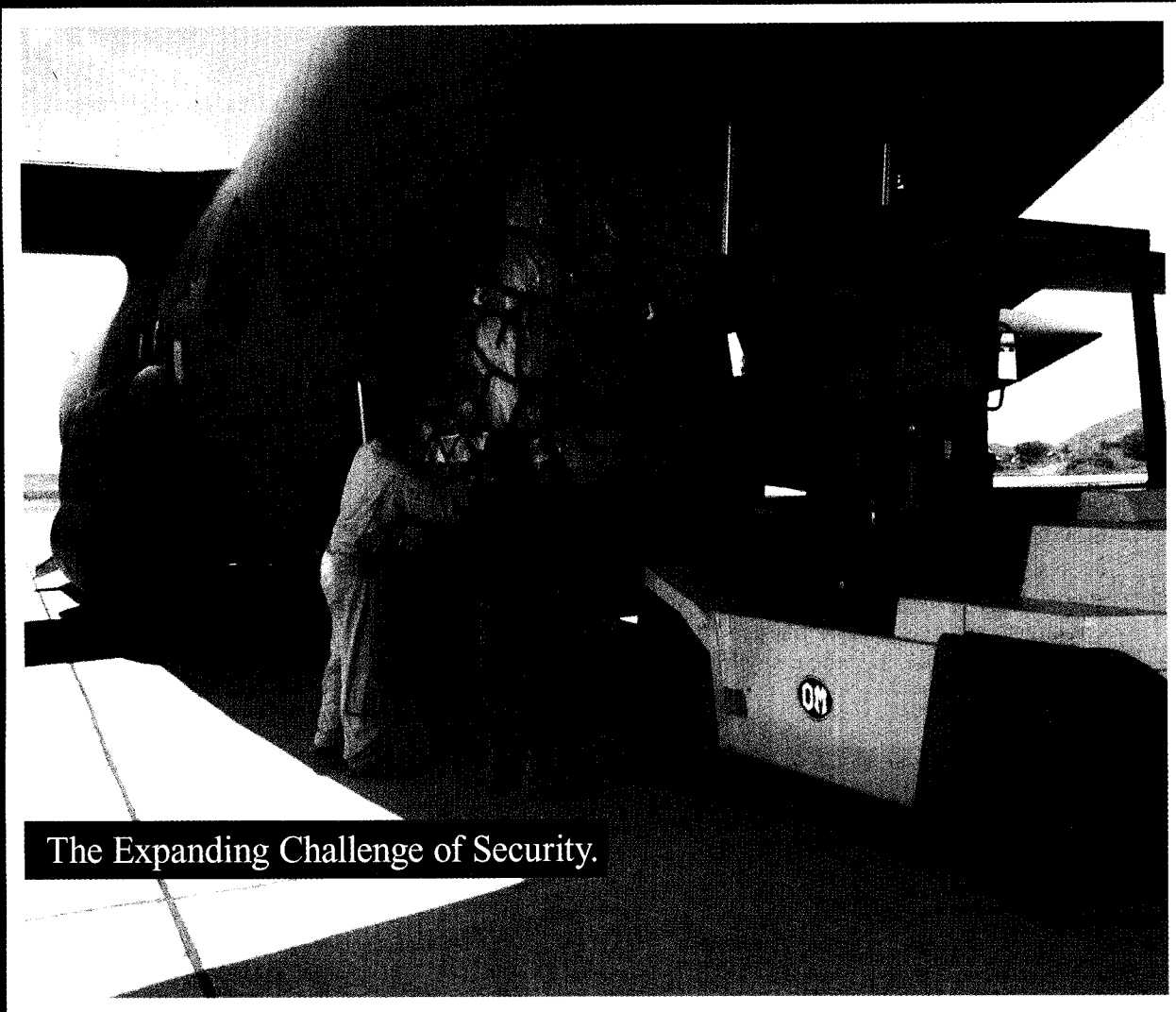
FACTORY WORKERS on their way to work in Shenzhen

For me, the fragmented nature of the Chinese system is symbolized by yet another of the stunning sights in Shenzhen: the SEG Electronics Market, a seven-story downtown structure whose every inch is crammed with the sales booths of hundreds of mom-and-pop electronics dealers. "Chips that I couldn't dream of buying in the U.S., reels of rare ceramic capacitors that I only dream about at night!" Andrew "Bunnie" Huang, a Chinese-American electronics Ph.D. from MIT, wrote in his blog after a visit. "My senses tingle, my head spins. I can't suppress a smirk of anticipation as I walk around the next corner, to see shops stacked floor to ceiling with probably a hundred million resistors and capacitors." As he noted, "within an hour's drive north" were hundreds of factories that could "take any electronics ideas and pump them out by the literal boatload." The market is part permanent trade show, part supply stop for people who suddenly need some capacitors or connectors for a prototype or last-minute project, part swap meet where traders unload surplus components.

The low-road reason is the "Nike problem." This is the buyers' wish to minimize their brands' association with outsourcing in general and Asian sweatshops in particular, named for Nike's PR problems because of its factories in Indonesia. By Chinese standards, the most successful exporting factories are tough rather than abusive, but those are not the standards Western customers might apply.

The high-road reason involves the crucial operational importance of the "supply chain." It is not easy to find the right factory, work out the right manufacturing system, ensure the right supply of parts and raw material, impose the right quality standards, and develop the right relationship of trust and reliability. Companies that have solved these problems don't want to tell their competitors how they did so. "Supply chain *is* intellectual property," is the way Liam Casey put it. Asking a Western company to specify its Chinese suppliers is like asking a reporter to hand over a list of his best sources.

Because keeping the supply chain confidential is so important to buyers, they try to impose confidentiality on



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their suppliers. When an outside company's reputation for design and quality is strong—Sony, Braun, Apple—many Chinese contractors like to drop hints that they are part of its supply chain. But the ones who really are part of it must be more discreet if they want to retain the buying company's trust (and business).

So I will withhold details, but ask you to take this leap: If you think of major U.S. or European brand names in the following businesses, odds are their products come from factories like those I'm about to describe. The businesses are: computers, including desktops, laptops, and servers; telecom equipment, from routers to mobile phones; audio equipment, including anything MP3-related, home stereo systems, most portable devices, and headsets; video equipment of all sorts, from cameras and camcorders to replay devices; personal-care items and high-end specialty-catalog goods; medical devices; sporting goods and exercise equipment; any kind of electronic goods or accessories; and, for that matter, just about anything else you can

within a mile, and they can bring a sample over that afternoon. People think China is cheap, but really, it's *fast*. Moreover, the Chinese factories use more human labor, and fewer expensive robots or assembly machines, than their counterparts in rich countries. "People are the most adaptable machines," an American industrial designer who works in China told me. "Machines need to be reprogrammed. You can have people doing something entirely different next week."

Or: You are an American inventor with a product you think has "green" potential for household energy savings. But you need to get it to market fast, because you think big companies may be trying the same thing, and you need to meet a target retail price of \$100. "No place but China to do this," Mr. China said, as he showed me the finished product.

Or: You are a very famous American company, and you worry that you've tied up too much capital keeping inventory for retail stores at several supply depots in America.

"The people here work hard," an American manager in a U.S.-owned plant says. "They're young. They're quick. There's none of this 'I have to go pick up the kids' nonsense you get in the States."

think of. Some of the examples I'll give come from sites in Shenzhen, but others are from facilities near Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Xiamen, and elsewhere.

Why does a foreign company come to our Mr. China? I asked Casey what he would tell me if I were in, say, some branch of the steel industry in Pittsburgh and was looking to cut costs. "Not interested," he said. "The product's too heavy, and you've probably already automated the process, so one person is pushing a button. It would cost you almost as much to have someone push the button in China."

But what is of intense interest to him, he said, is a company that has built up a brand name and relationships with retailers, and knows what it wants to promote and sell next—and needs to save time and money in manufacturing a product that requires a fair amount of assembly. "That is where we can help, because you will come here and see factories that are better than the ones you've been working with in America or Germany."

Here are a few examples, all based on real-world cases: You have announced a major new product, which has gotten great buzz in the press. But close to release time, you discover a design problem that must be fixed—and no U.S. factory can adjust its production process in time.

The Chinese factories can respond more quickly, and not simply because of 12-hour workdays. "Anyplace else, you'd have to import different raw materials and components," Casey told me. "Here, you've got nine different suppliers

With Mr. China's help, you start emphasizing direct retail sales on your Web site—and do all the shipping and fulfillment from one supply depot, run by young Chinese women in Shenzhen, who can ship directly to specific retail stores.

Over the course of repeated visits to Shenzhen—the breakfasts!—and visits to other manufacturing regions, I heard about many similar cases and saw some of the tools that have made it possible for Western countries to view China as their manufacturing heartland.

Some involve computerized knowledge. Casey's PCH has a Google Earth-like system that incorporates what he has learned in 10 years of dealing with Chinese subcontractors. You name a product you want to make—say, a new case or headset for a mobile phone. Casey clicks on the map and shows the companies that can produce the necessary components—and exactly how far they are from each other in travel time. This is hard-won knowledge in an area where city maps are out of date as soon as they are published and addresses are approximate. (Casey's are keyed in with GPS coordinates, discreetly read from his GPS-equipped mobile phone when he visits each factory.) If a factory looks promising, you click again and get interior and exterior photos, a rundown on the management, in some cases videos of the assembly line in action, plus spec sheets and engineering drawings for orders they have already filled. Similar programs allow Casey and his clients to see which ship, plane,



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or truck their products are on anywhere in the world, and the amount of stock on hand in any warehouse or depot. (How do they know? Each finished piece and almost every component has an individual bar code that is scanned practically every time it is touched.)

The factories whose workflow Casey monitors vary tremendously, though not in their looks. I've come to think that there is only one set of blueprints for factories in China: a big, boxy, warehouse-looking structure, usually made of concrete and usually five stories; white or gray outside; relatively large windows, which is how you can tell it from the workers' dormitories; high ceilings, to accommodate machines. But inside, some are highly automated while some are amazingly reliant on hand labor. I'm not even speaking of the bad, dangerous, and out-of-date factories frequently found in the north of China, where leftover Maoist-era

heavy-industry hulks abound. Even some newly built facilities leave to human hands work that has been done in the West for many decades by machines. Imagine opening a consumer product—a mobile phone, an electric toothbrush, a wireless router—and finding a part that was snapped on or glued into place. It was probably put there by a young Chinese woman who did the same thing many times per minute throughout her 12-hour workday.

I could describe many installations, but I was fascinated by two. The first represents one extreme in automation. It is owned and operated by Inventec, one of five companies based in Taiwan that together produce the vast majority of laptop and notebook computers sold under any brand anywhere in the world. Everyone in America has heard of Dell, Sony, Compaq, HP, Lenovo-IBM ThinkPad, Apple, NEC, Gateway, Toshiba. Almost no one has heard of Quanta, Compal, Inventec, Wistron, Asustek. Yet nearly 90 percent of laptops and notebooks sold under the famous brand names are actually made by one of these five companies in their factories in mainland China. I have seen a factory with three "competing" brand names coming off the same line.

The Inventec installation I saw was in an export-processing zone in Shanghai specially created for the company, in which imported components for manufacturing and finished products for export were free of the usual duties or taxes. It turns out more than 30,000 notebook computers per day, under one of the brand names listed above. Each day, an Inventec plant on the same campus produces hundreds of large, famous-brand-name server computers to run Internet traffic.

This is today's rough counterpart to the Ford Motor Company's old River Rouge works. In the heyday of The Rouge, rubber, steel, and other raw materials would come into the plant, and finished autos would come out. Here, naked green circuit boards, capacitors, chip sets, and other components come in each day, and notebook computers come out. Some advanced components arrive already assembled: disk drives from Taiwan or Singapore, LCD screens from Korea or Japan, keyboards and power supplies from other plants in China.

The overall process looks the way you would expect a high-tech assembly line to. Conveyers and robots take the evolving computer from station to station; each unit arrives in front of a worker a split second after she has finished with the previous one. Before a component goes into a machine, its bar code is scanned to be sure it is the right part; after it is added, the machine is "check-weighed" to see that its new weight is correct. Hundreds of tiny transistors, chips, and other electronic parts are attached to each circuit board by "pick and place" robots, whose multiple arms move almost too fast to follow. The welds on the board are scanned with lasers for defects. Any with problems are set aside for women specialists,

PERILOUS RIDDLE

If I am a riddle, I am not a man.

Ain't that the truth. Ain't I a riddle?

If I am a man, I am not a riddle.

If I am a woman, am I a riddle?

Ain't I a woman?

If I am a riddle, I am not a man.

If I am Sophocles, I am not mad.

If I am mad,

If I am a man, I am not a riddle.

If I am tragic, I am proud, middling manly.

If I am proud, am I tragic?

If I am a riddle, I am not a man.

Not a warrior, nor an old man,

Nor an infant's versatile diddle.

If I am a man, I am not a riddle.

If I am a sphinx, my intellect

Unmans you. Ending choice? Chance?

If I am a riddle, I am not a man.

If I am a man, I am not a riddle.

—JUDITH HALL

Judith Hall's most recent collections are *Three Trios* (2007) and *The Promised Folly* (2003). She teaches at the California Institute of Technology and at New England College.

looking through huge magnifying glasses, to reweld. Why did this factory invest so much in robots and machine tools? I asked a supervisor from Taiwan. "People can't do it precisely enough," was his answer. These factories automate not what's too expensive but what's too delicate for human beings to perform.

Many of the notebook computers have been ordered online, and as they near completion each is "flavored" for its destination. The day I visited, one was going to Tokyo, with a Japanese keyboard installed and Japanese logos snapped into the right places on the case; the next one was headed for the United States. After display screens are installed, each computer rides on a kind of racetrack along the ceiling of the factory, where it runs for several hours to make sure that all components work. Then the conveyers carry it to the final flavoring step—the "burn in" of the operating system, which on my visit was Windows Vista, in many languages. One engineer pointed out that because Vista requires up to 10 times as much disk space as Windows XP, the assembly line had to be altered to allow a much longer, slower passage through the burn-in station.

The other facility that intrigued me, one of Liam Casey's in Shenzhen, handled online orders for a different well-known American company. I was there around dawn, which was crunch time. Because of the 12-hour time difference from the U.S. East Coast, orders Americans place in the late afternoon arrive in China in the dead of night. As I watched, a customer in Palatine, Illinois, perhaps shopping from his office, clicked on the American company's Web site to order two \$25 accessories. A few seconds later, the order appeared on the screen 7,800 miles away in Shenzhen. It automatically generated a packing and address slip and several bar-code labels. One young woman put the address label on a brown cardboard shipping box and the packing slip inside. The box moved down a conveyor belt to another woman working a "pick to light" system: She stood in front of a kind of cupboard with a separate open-fronted bin for each item customers might order from the Web site; a light turned on over each bin holding a part specified in the latest order. She picked the item out of that bin, ran it past a scanner that checked its number (and signaled the light to go off), and put it in the box. More checkweighing and rescanning followed, and when the box was sealed, young men added it to a shipping pallet.

By the time the night shift was ready to leave—8 a.m. China time, 7 p.m. in Palatine, 8 p.m. on the U.S. East Coast—the volume of orders from America was tapering off. More important, the FedEx pickup time was drawing near. At 9 a.m. couriers would arrive and rush the pallets to the Hong Kong airport. The FedEx flight to Anchorage would leave by 6 p.m., and when it got there, the goods on this company's pallets would be combined with other Chinese exports and re-sorted for destinations in America. Forty-eight hours after the man in Palatine clicked "Buy it

now!" on his computer, the item showed up at his door. Its return address was a company warehouse in the United States; a small MADE IN CHINA label was on the bottom of the box.

At 8 a.m. in Shenzhen, the young women on the night shift got up from the assembly line, took off the hats and hairnets they had been wearing, and shook out their dark hair. They passed through the metal detector at the door to their workroom (they pass through it going in and coming out) and walked downstairs to the racks where they had left their bikes. They wore red company jackets, as part of their working uniform—and, as an informal uniform, virtually every one wore tight, low-rise blue jeans with embroidery or sequins on the seams. Most of them rode their bikes back to the dormitory; others walked, or walked their bikes, chatting with each other. That evening they would be back at work. Meanwhile, flocks of red-topped, blue-bottomed young women on the day shift filled the road, riding their bikes in.

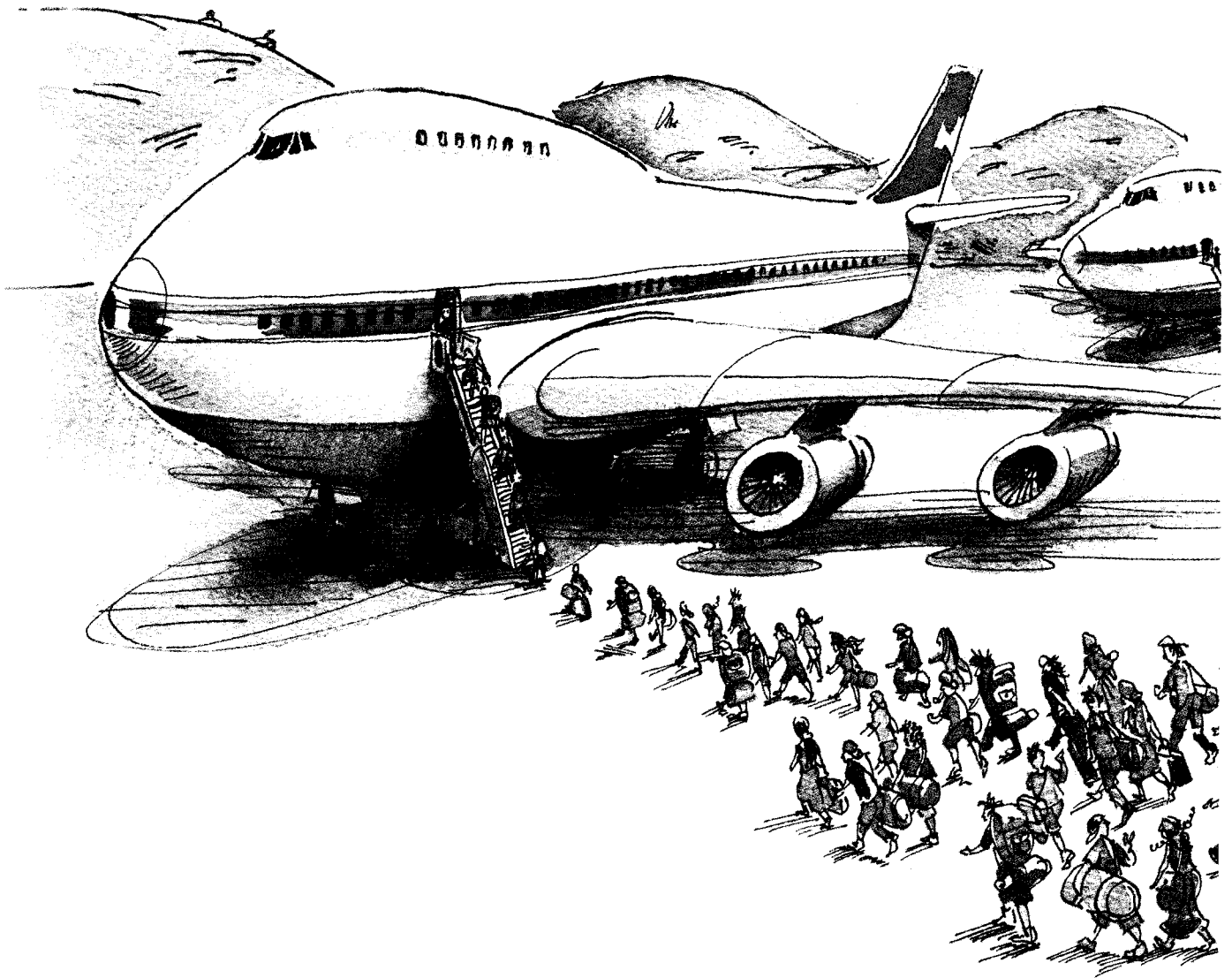
GOOD FOR US—FOR NOW

What should we make of this? The evidence suggests what I hadn't expected: that the interaction has been good for most participants—so far.

Has the factory boom been good for China? Of course it has. Yes, it creates environmental pressures that, if not controlled, could pollute China and the world out of existence. The national government's current Five Year Plan—the 11th, running through 2010—has as its central theme China's development as a "harmonious society," or *hexie shehui*, a phrase heard about as often from China's leadership as "global war on terror" has been heard from America's. In China, the phrase is code for attempting to deal with income inequalities, especially the hardships of farmers and millions of migrant laborers. But it is also code for at least talking about protecting the environment.

And, yes, throughout China's boom many people have been mistreated, oppressed, sometimes worked to death in factories. Even those not abused may be lonely and lost, with damaging effects on the country's social fabric. But this was also the story of Britain and America when they built their great industries, their great turbulent industrial cities, and ultimately their great industrial middle classes. For China, it is far from the worst social disruption the country has endured in the last 50 years. At least this upheaval, unlike the disastrous Great Leap Forward of the 1950s and Cultural Revolution of the '60s and early '70s, has some benefits for individuals and the nation.

Some Westerners may feel that even today's "normal" Chinese working conditions amount to slave labor—\$100 a month, no life outside the factory, work shifts so long there's barely time to do more than try to sleep in a jam-packed dormitory. Here is an uncomfortable truth I'm waiting for some Chinese official to point out: The woman from



If 12 fully loaded jumbo jets crashed every year, *something would be done about it.*

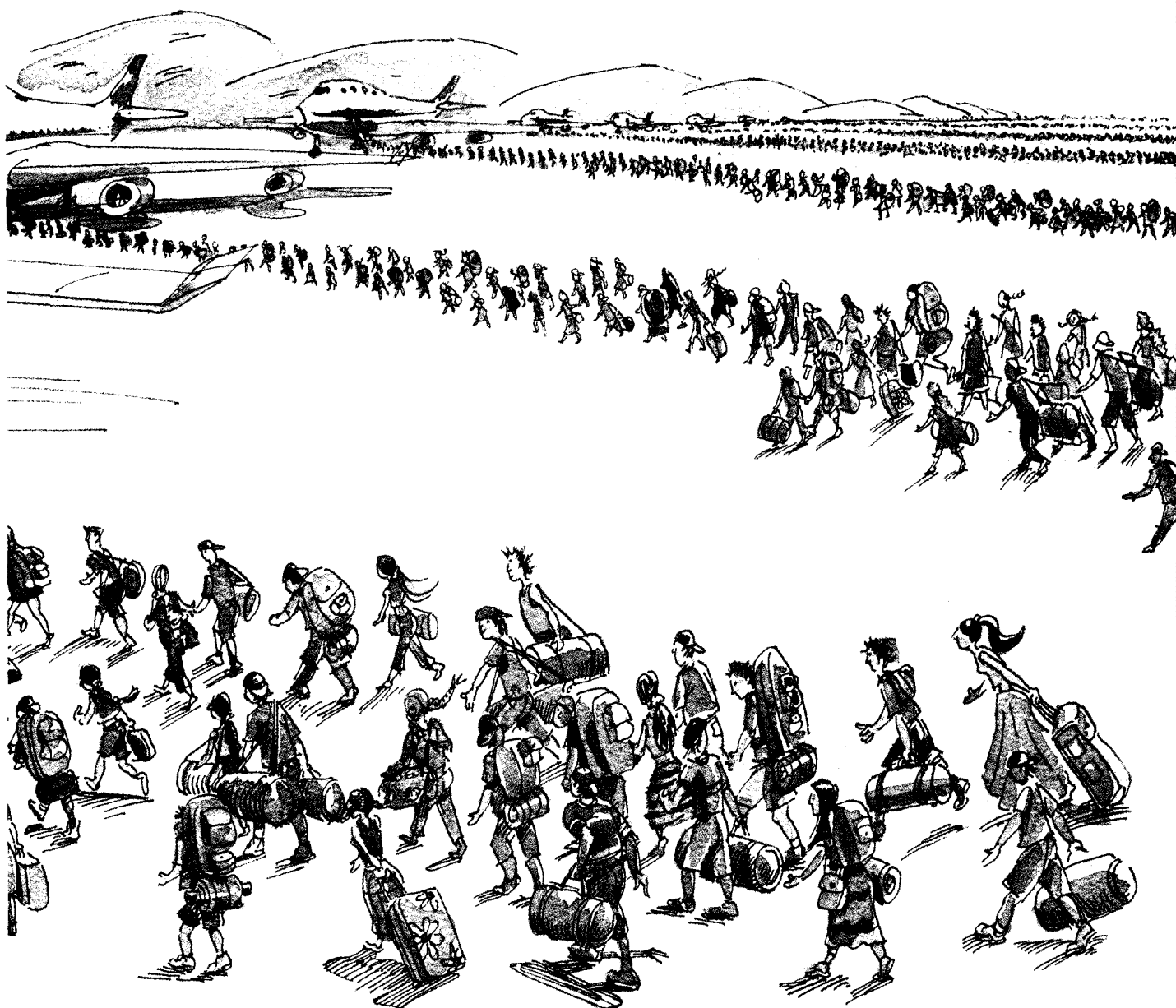
EVERY YEAR, NEARLY 6,000 TEENS DIE IN CAR CRASHES.

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the hinterland working in Shenzhen is arguably better off economically than an American in Chicago living on minimum wage. She can save most of what she makes and feel she is on the way up; the American can't and doesn't. Over the next two years, the minimum wage in the United States is expected to rise to \$7.25 an hour. Assuming a 40-hour week, that's just under \$1,200 per month, or about 10 times the Chinese factory wage. But that's before payroll deductions and the cost of food and housing, which are free or subsidized in China's factory towns.

Chinese spokesmen do make a different point about their economy, and they rattle it off so frequently that Western audiences are tempted to dismiss it. They say, "Whatever else we have done, we have brought hundreds of millions of people out of poverty." That is true, it is important, and the manufacturing export boom has been

The curve is named for the U-shaped arc of the 1970s-era smiley-face icon, and it runs from the beginning to the end of a product's creation and sale. At the beginning is the company's brand: HP, Siemens, Dell, Nokia, Apple. Next comes the idea for the product: an iPod, a new computer, a camera phone. After that is high-level industrial design—the conceiving of how the product will look and work. Then the detailed engineering design for how it will be made. Then the necessary components. Then the actual manufacture and assembly. Then the shipping and distribution. Then retail sales. And, finally, service contracts and sales of parts and accessories.

The significance is that China's activity is in the middle stages—manufacturing, plus some component supply and engineering design—but America's is at the two ends, and those are where the money is. The smiley curve, which



CHIP RESISTORS displayed in martini glasses at a booth inside the SEG Electronics Market in Shenzhen

a significant part of how China has done it. This economic success obviously does not justify everything the regime has done, especially its crushing of any challenge to one-party rule. But the magnitude of the achievement can't be ignored. For all of the billions of dollars given in foreign aid and supervised by the World Bank, the greatest good for the greatest number of the world's previously impoverished people in at least the last half century has been achieved in China, thanks largely to the outsourcing boom.

Has the move to China been good for American companies? The answer would seemingly have to be yes—otherwise, why would they go there? It is conceivable that bad partnerships, stolen intellectual property, dilution of brand name, logistics nightmares, or other difficulties have given many companies a sour view of outsourcing; I have heard examples in each category from foreign executives. But the more interesting theme I have heard from them, which explains why they are willing to surmount the inconveniences, involves something called the "smiley curve."

shows the profitability or value added at each stage, starts high for branding and product concept, swoops down for manufacturing, and rises again in the retail and servicing stages. The simple way to put this—that the real money is in brand name, plus retail—may sound obvious, but its implications are illuminating.

At each factory I visited, I asked managers to estimate how much of a product's sales price ended up in whose hands. The strength of the brand name was the most important variable. If a product is unusual enough and its brand name attractive enough, it could command so high a price that the retailer might keep half the revenue. (Think: an Armani suit, a Starbucks latte.) Most electronics products are now subject to much fiercer price competition, since it is so easy for shoppers to find bargains on the Internet. Therefore the generic Windows-style laptops I saw in one modern factory might go for around \$1,000 in the United States, with the retailer keeping less than \$50.

Where does the rest of the money go? The manager of that factory guessed that Intel and Microsoft together

would collect about \$300, and that the makers of the display screen, the disk-storage devices, and other electronic components might get \$150 or so apiece. The keyboard makers would get \$15 or \$20; FedEx or UPS would get slightly less. When all other costs were accounted for, perhaps \$30 to \$40—3 to 4 percent of the total—would stay in China with the factory owners and the young women on the assembly lines.

Other examples: A carrying case for an audio device from a big-name Western company retails for just under \$30. That company pays the Chinese supplier \$6 per case, of which about half goes for materials. The other \$24 stays with the big-name company. An earphone-like accessory for another U.S.-brand audio device also retails for about \$30. Of this, I was told, \$3 stayed in China. I saw a set of high-end Ethernet connecting cables. The cables are sold, with identical specifications but in three different kinds of packaging, in three forms in the United States: as a specialty product, as a house brand in a nationwide office-supply store, and with no brand over eBay. The

falling against the RMB. This year the central government created a commission to consider the right long-term use for China's reserves. No one expects the recommendation to be: Keep buying dollars. How and when the change will occur, what it will be, and what consequences it will have, is what everyone would like to know.

One other aspect of China's development to date has helped American companies in their dealings with it. This is the fact that China, so far, has been different in crucial ways from America's previous great Asian challenger: Japan. Americans have come to view the Japanese economy as a kind of joke, mainly because the Tokyo Stock Exchange has been in a slump for nearly 20 years. Nonetheless, Japan remains the world's second-largest economy. Toyota has overtaken General Motors to become the largest automaker; Japan's exporters have continually increased their sales of electronics and other high-value goods; and the long-standing logic of the Japanese system, in which consumers and investors suffer so that producers may thrive, remains intact.

“Here, you’ve got nine different suppliers within a mile, and they can bring a sample over that afternoon,” Casey told me. “People think China is cheap, but really, it’s *fast*.”

retail prices are \$29.95 for the specialty brand, \$19.95 in the chain store, and \$15.95 on eBay. The Shenzhen-area company that makes them gets \$2 apiece.

In case the point isn't clear: Chinese workers making \$1,000 a year have been helping American designers, marketers, engineers, and retailers making \$1,000 a week (and up) earn even more. Plus, they have helped shareholders of U.S.-based companies.

All this is apart from a phenomenon that will be the subject of a future article: China's conversion of its trade surpluses into a vast hoard of dollar-denominated reserves. Everyone understands that in the short run China's handling of its reserves has been a convenience to the United States. By placing more than \$1 trillion in U.S. stock and bond markets, it has propped up the U.S. economy. Asset prices are higher than they would otherwise be; interest rates are lower, whether for American families taking out mortgages or for American taxpayers financing the ever-mounting federal debt. The dollar has also fallen less than it otherwise would have—which in the short run helps American consumers keep buying Chinese goods.

Everyone also understands that in the long run China must change this policy. Its own people need too many things—schools, hospitals, railroads—for it to keep sending its profits to America. It won't forever sink its savings into a currency, the dollar, virtually guaranteed to keep

Japan was already a rich and modern country, as China still is not, by the time trade friction intensified, in the 1980s. More important, its leading companies were often competing head-to-head with established high-value, high-tech companies in the United States: Fujitsu against IBM, Toshiba against Intel, Fuji against Kodak, Sony and Matsushita against Motorola, and on down the list. Gains for Japanese companies often meant direct losses for companies in America—whether those companies were seen as stodgy and noninnovative, like the Detroit firms, or technologically agile and advanced, like the semiconductor makers.

For the moment, China's situation is different. Its companies are numerous but small. Lenovo and Qingdao are its two globally recognized brand names. But Lenovo is known mainly because it bought the ThinkPad brand from IBM, and a quarter of Qingdao Beer is owned by Anheuser-Busch. Chinese exporters have done best when working for, rather than against, Western companies, as Foxconn (like numerous smaller firms) has in working with Apple. While the Chinese government obviously wants to strengthen the country's brands—for instance, with an aircraft company it hopes will compete with Boeing and Airbus—its “industrial planning” has mainly taken the form not of specific targeting but of general business promotion, as with the incentives that brought companies to Shenzhen.

China's economy, technically still socialist, has also been strangely more open than Japan's. Through its first four decades of growth after World War II, Japan was essentially closed to foreign ownership and investment. (Texas Instruments and IBM were two highly publicized exceptions to the rule.) China's industrial boom, by contrast, is occurring during the age of the World Trade Organization, to which it was admitted in 2001. Under WTO rules, China is obliged to open itself to foreign investment and ownership at a much earlier stage of its development than Japan did. Its export boom has been led by foreign firms. China is rife with intellectual piracy, hidden trade barriers, and other impediments. But overall it is harder for foreign economies or foreign companies to claim damage from China's trade policies than from Japan's.

When I was living in Japan through its boom of the late '80s, I argued in this magazine that its behavior illustrated some great historic truths that economic models cannot easily include. Sometimes societies pursue goals other than the one economists consider rational: the greatest

China's behavior, and that of its companies, is easier to match with standard economic theories than Japan's. So far, deals like those struck at the Sheraton Four Points have been mainly good for all parties. Chinese families have new opportunities in life. American customers have wider choices. American investors have better returns. But, of course, there are complications.

First is the social effect visible around the world, which in homage to China's Communist past we can call "intensifying the contradictions." Global trade involves one great contradiction: The lower the barriers to the flow of money, products, and ideas, the less it matters where people live. But because most people cannot move from one country to another, it will always matter where people live. In a world of frictionless, completely globalized trade, people on average would all be richer—but every society would include a wider range of class, comfort, and well-being than it now does. Those with the most marketable global talents would be richer, because they could sell to the largest possible market. Everyone else would be poorer,

Chinese workers making \$1,000 a year have been helping American designers, marketers, engineers, and retailers making \$1,000 a week (and up) earn even more.

possible growth of consumer well-being. This has been true of America mainly during wartime, but also when it has pursued martial-toned projects thought to be in the nation's interest: building interstate highways, sending men into space, perhaps someday developing alternative energy supplies. In a more consistent way, over decades, this has been true of Japan.

For anyone who has taken Ec 101, the natural response would be: That's their problem! They're making high-quality products for everyone else, so what's not to like? But in the past decade, a growing number of respectable economists have argued that the situation is not that simple. If one nation deliberately promotes high-tech and high-value industries, it can end up with more of those industries, and more of the high-wage jobs that go with them, than it would have otherwise. This is not economically "rational"—European countries have paid heavily for each job they have created through Airbus. But Boeing sells fewer airplanes and employs fewer engineers than it presumably would without competition from Airbus. The United States does not have to emulate Europe's approach, or Japan's. But it needs to be aware of them, and of the possible consequences. (With different emphases, Paul Samuelson of MIT, Alan Blinder and William Baumol of Princeton, and Ralph Gomory, head of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, have advanced this argument.)

because of competition from a billions-strong labor pool. With no trade barriers, there would be no reason why the average person in, say, Holland would be better off than the average one in India. Each society would contain a cross section of the world's whole income distribution—yet its people would have to live within the same national borders.

We're nowhere near that point. But the increasing integration of the American and Chinese economies pushes both countries toward it. This is more or less all good for China, but not all good for America. It means economic benefits mainly for those who have already succeeded, a harder path up for those who are already at a disadvantage, and further strain on the already weakened sense of fellow feeling and shared opportunity that allows a society as diverse and unequal as America's to cohere.

A further problem is that China's business and governmental leaders are all too aware of how the smiley curve affects them. Yes, it's better to have jobs that pay \$1,000 a year than none at all. But it would be better still to have jobs that pay many times as much and are at more desirable positions along the curve. If the United States were in China's position, it would be doing everything possible to bring more high-value work within its borders—and that, of course, is what China is trying to do. Everywhere you turn you see an illustration.

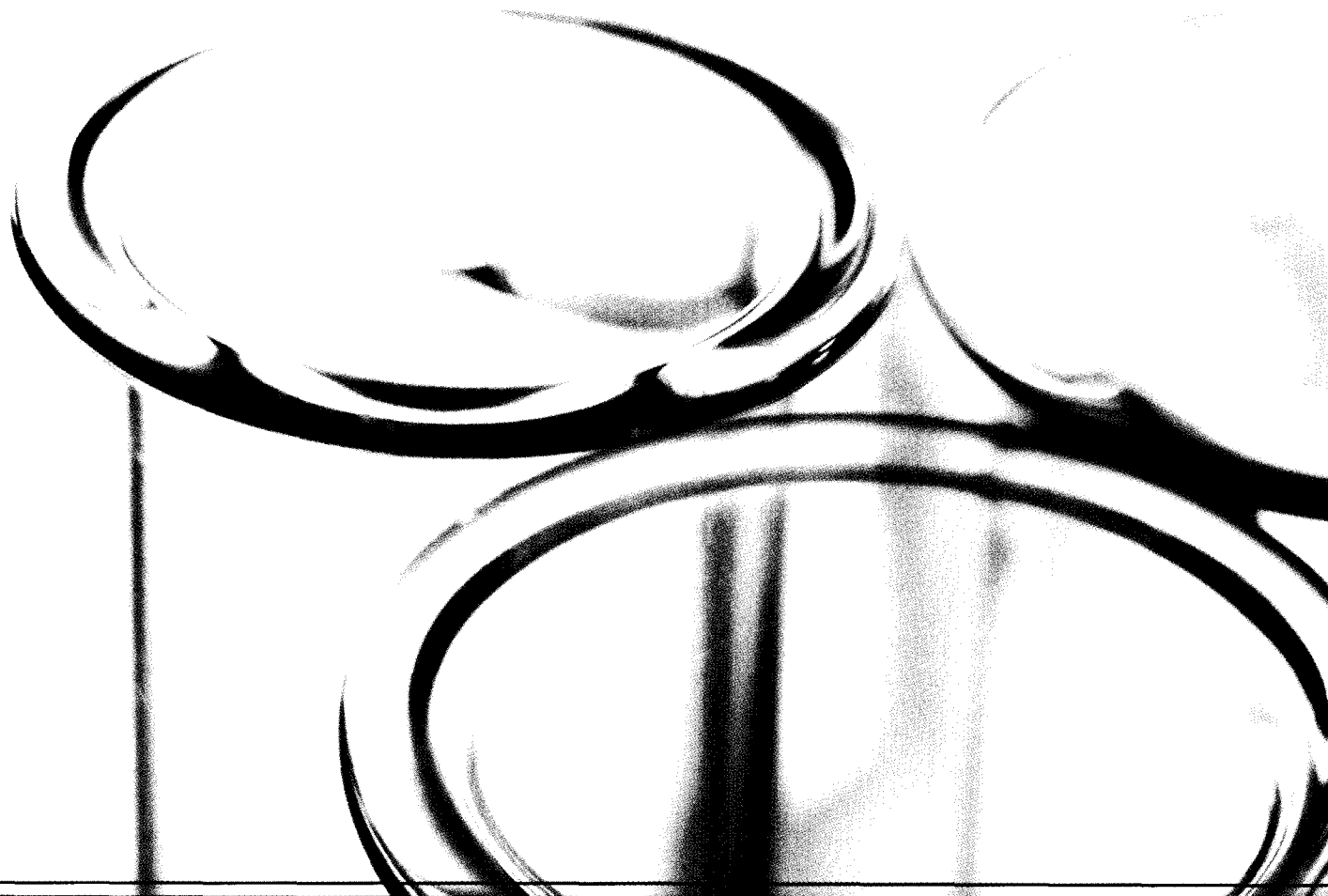
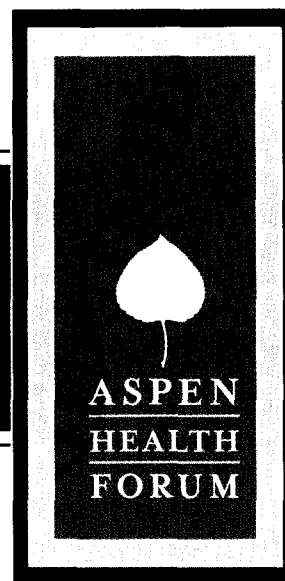
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Just a few: In the far north of China, Intel has just agreed to build a major chip-fabrication plant, with high-end engineering and design jobs, not just seats on the assembly line. In Beijing, both Microsoft and Google have opened genuine research centers, not just offices to serve the local market. Down in Shenzhen, Liam Casey's company is creating industrial-design centers, where products will be conceived, not just snapped together. What was recently a factory zone in Shanghai is being gentrified; local authorities are pushing factories to relocate 10 miles away, so their buildings can be turned into white-collar engineering and design centers.

At the moment, most jobs I've seen the young women in the factories perform have not been "taken" from America, because in America these assembly-type tasks would be done by machines. But the Chinese goal is, of course, to build toward something more lucrative.

Many people I have spoken with say that the climb will be slow for Chinese industries, because they have so far to go in bringing their design, management, and branding efforts up to world standards. "Think about it—global companies are full of CEOs and executives from India, but very few Chinese," Dominic Barton, the chairman of McKinsey's Asia Pacific practice, told me. The main reason, he said, is China's limited pool of executives with adequate foreign-language skills and experience working abroad. Andy Switky, the managing director—Asia Pacific for the famed California design firm IDEO, described a frequent Chinese outlook toward quality control as "happy with crappy." This makes it hard for them to move beyond the local, low-value market. "Even now in China, most people don't have an iPod or a notebook computer," the manager of a Taiwanese-owned audio-device factory told me. "So it's harder for them to think up improvements, or even tell a good one from a bad one." These and other factors may slow China's progress. But that's a feeble basis for American hopes.

The measures Americans most often discuss for dealing with China are not much better as a long-term basis for hope. Yes, the RMB is now undervalued against the dollar. Yes, that makes Chinese exports cheaper than they would otherwise be. And yes, the RMB's value should rise—and it will. But at no conceivable level would it bring those Shenzhen jobs back to Ohio. At best it would make U.S. exports, from locomotives and high-tech medical equipment to wine and software, more attractive. Such commercial victories are important, but they are unlikely to be advanced by threats of retaliatory tariffs if China does not speed the RMB's climb. Also, the faster the dollar falls against the RMB, the faster Chinese authorities might move their assets out of dollars to stronger currencies.

This year the U.S. government imposed special tariffs, called countervailing duties, on imports of glossy paper from China. This is the kind of paper used to print

magazines and catalogs, and Chinese exports of it to the United States rose tenfold from 2004 to 2006. The U.S. government said the duties were necessary to offset the export subsidies Chinese manufacturers receive via low-cost loans, tax breaks, and other benefits. Under WTO rules, export subsidies of all sorts are prohibited; U.S. officials, academics, and trade groups have prepared lists of de facto subsidies that cut the price of Chinese goods to U.S. consumers by 25 percent, 40 percent, and even more. (The Chinese—like the Europeans, Australians, and others—are quick to retort that the United States subsidizes many products too, especially exports from large-scale farms.)

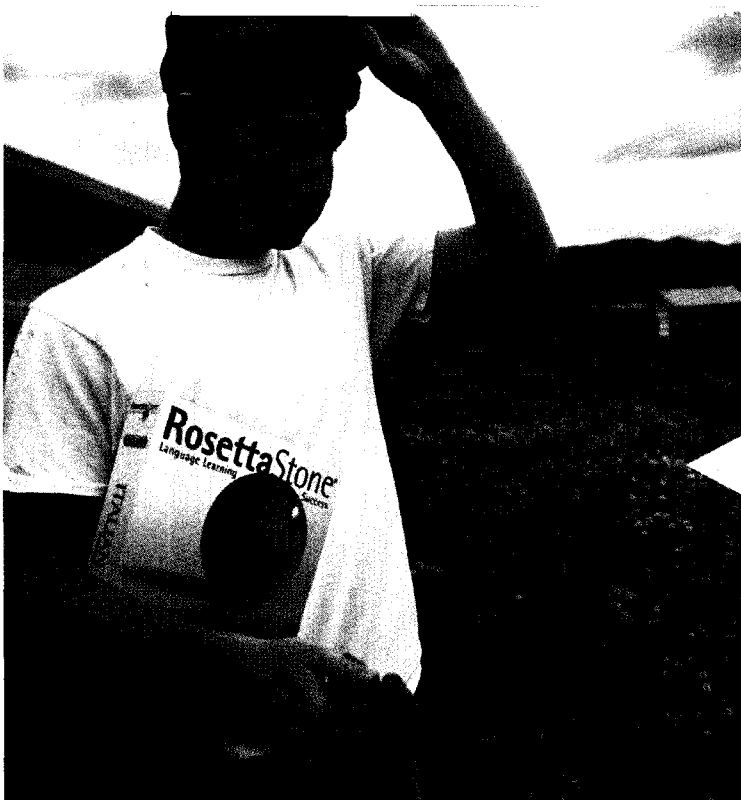
This is obviously significant. But think again of those Ethernet connectors that retail for \$29.95 and cost only \$2 to make. Removing all imaginable subsidies might push the manufacturing cost to \$3. Suppose it went to \$4. That would have a big effect on decisions made by corporations that outsource to China—Can they raise the retail price? Must they just accept a lower margin? Should they build the next factory in Vietnam?—but it would not make anyone bring production back to the United States.

Government policy and favoritism may play a big role in China's huge road-building and land-development policies, but they seem to be secondary factors in the outsourcing boom. For instance, when I asked Mr. China which officials I should try to interview in the local Shenzhen government to understand how they worked with companies, he said he didn't know. He'd never met any.

American complaints about the RMB, about subsidies, and about other Chinese practices have this in common: They assume that the solution to long-term tensions in the trading relationship lies in changes on China's side. I think that assumption is naive. If the United States is unhappy with the effects of its interaction with China, that's America's problem, not China's. To imagine that the United States can stop China from pursuing its own economic ambitions through nagging, threats, or enticement is to fool ourselves. If a country does not like the terms of its business dealings with the world, it needs to change its own policies, not expect the world to change. China has done just that, to its own benefit—and, up until now, to America's.

Are we uncomfortable with the America that is being shaped by global economic forces? The inequality? The sense of entitlement for some? Of stifled opportunity for others? The widespread fear that today's trends—borrowing, consuming, looking inward, using up infrastructure—will make it hard to stay ahead tomorrow, particularly in regard to China? If so, those trends themselves, and the American choices behind them, are what Americans can address. They're not China's problem, and they're not the fault of anyone in Shenzhen. ▀

James Fallows is an *Atlantic* national correspondent.



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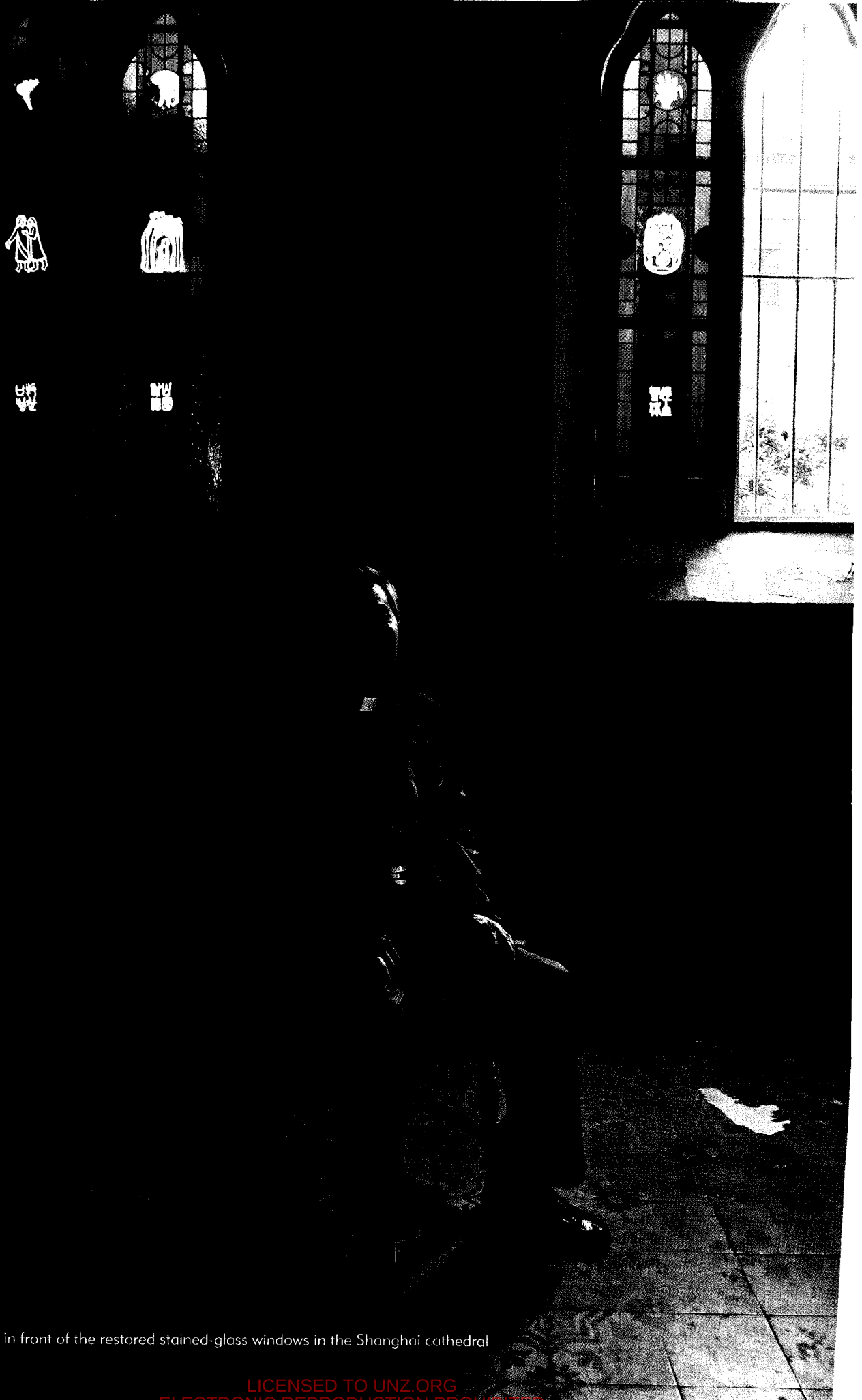
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BISHOP JIN in front of the restored stained-glass windows in the Shanghai cathedral

Jin Luxian's 50-year struggle to keep Catholicism alive in China, balance Rome and Beijing, and build a Church for "100 million Catholics"

BY ADAM MINTER

Photographs by Ritsu Shinozaki

Keeping Faith

On a June day in 1982, Father Aloysius Jin Luxian, a 66-year-old Jesuit just released from prison, walked into Shanghai's St. Ignatius Cathedral for the first time in 27 years. In his youth, the building had been one of the great churches in East Asia, celebrated for its delicate Gothic arches and colorful stained glass. Now the color was gone, replaced by clear glass and harsh sunlight that bleached the cracked columns and tiled floor. The steeples, once among the tallest in

Shanghai, were missing, as was the altar beneath which he'd been ordained, in 1945. Jin had spent nearly three decades under house arrest, in reeducation camps, and in prison, so he had few illusions about the Chinese Communist Party's attitude toward religion. But the damage to the church was still hard to bear. St. Ignatius, he learned, had been converted to a grain warehouse during the Cultural Revolution, and the authorities had spent three days burning most of the diocese's Catholic books in front of the church.

Now services were being held again. But open prayers for the pope were strictly prohibited, and scant mention of the holy father could be found in any of the crudely printed books used in the cathedral. Mass was still in Latin, unintelligible to most Chinese. The current bishop had been ordained without approval from Rome, by a Communist government determined to erase the memory of Shanghai's

still-incarcerated bishop, Ignatius Kung (Gong) Pin-mei. Everything was under the direct control of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the 25-year-old government agency that oversaw Chinese Catholic life.

Yet on Saturday nights, the church was packed, its pews filled with 2,500 or more parishioners. Morning Mass wasn't quite as crowded, but it *happened*, and regularly. Elsewhere in Shanghai, four more Catholic churches were holding services, and they, too, were packed on Saturday nights. All these parishioners were attended to by 60 elderly priests, who'd submitted to living together in a single house, under strict CPA supervision, because they were determined to live openly as Catholic priests.

Priests had other options, including a nascent "underground" movement, whose members refused to worship in churches registered with the Religious Affairs Bureau, which oversaw the CPA. During the later years of his

incarceration, Jin had become familiar with several priests who belonged to this movement, and he'd been impressed by their courage and piety. But the catastrophe that befell China's Catholics in the 1950s had convinced him that the underground movement, with its determination to confront the Communist Party, would never be able to provide a stable spiritual home for the thousands of Catholics who openly attended Mass in Shanghai every week.

Jin had once hoped that a distinctively Chinese Church would replace the missionary Church of his youth, reconciling his devout Roman Catholicism with his Chinese identity. The old attempts at reconciliation had failed

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Read an interview with Adam Minter
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because they'd emphasized one identity over the other, leaving a church that seemed neither authentically Catholic nor Chinese.

But now, with Rome separated from its Chinese followers, there was an opportunity to create a truly Chinese Church—for Jin, and for the Catholics he aspired to lead.

Twenty-five years later, Father Jin—now bishop of Shanghai—sat across from me in his third-floor office, facing the cathedral's restored steeples. "It was heartbreaking," he said of the day he returned to the cathedral, and threw up his hands. "But what could I do?" We were talking in English, one of the five languages he speaks fluently. At 91, he's a slight man, maybe five and a half feet tall, but his stiff posture gives him a sturdy presence, and when he took my hand to emphasize a point, I felt the metal of his bishop's ring.

Though largely unknown outside of China, Jin is arguably the most influential and controversial figure in Chinese Catholicism of the last 50 years. He played a leading role in persuading the authorities to allow a prayer for the pope to be said during Masses in China's registered, or "open," churches and in developing a Chinese-language liturgy, and he was single-handedly responsible for training more than 400 priests—including several who became Vatican-recognized bishops—in Shanghai's seminary. He's also been an unabashed supporter of dialogue and compromise with the Communist government. He accepted ordination as a bishop without Vatican approval and has taken a leading role in China's open churches, all of which still have to register with the Religious Affairs Bureau and are overseen by bishops appointed by the CPA in consultation with local congregations.

Defying canon law, as Jin has done on several occasions, is no small matter for a Catholic bishop. But Rome has tolerated his disobedience, largely because of what he's accomplished in Shanghai. From his modern office, Jin looks out over a diocese that includes 141 registered churches, 74 priests (most under the age of 40), 86 nuns, 83 seminarians, and 150,000 laypeople. In Shanghai, at

least, there's been a significant rapprochement between the underground Church and the open one, particularly on the leadership level: Jin is the most prominent Chinese open-Church bishop who recognizes, albeit quietly, the authority of the pope.

Indeed, the line between China's open and underground churches has been blurring for some time. There are members of the underground Church who still refuse to worship in open churches or to recognize the legitimacy of open-Church bishops. The open Church tends to be much more in line with the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, which translated the Mass into the vernacular and elevated the role of the laity; the underground Church tends to be nostalgic for the more hierarchical pre-Vatican II Church. But the reality of day-to-day life in the underground Church is more complex than the popular image of Christian believers hidden in Chinese catacombs would suggest. At least 90 percent of open-Church bishops have quietly reconciled with Rome, just as Jin did. In at least one diocese, a priest who served in the open Church was also ordained as an underground bishop. In other dioceses, underground priests have been known to hold Mass in open churches, often using missals and Bibles that Jin had translated and printed.

Nevertheless, the underground Church continues to be targeted by local governments wary of any social movement that refuses to recognize their authority (the national government is more tolerant). The harassment is most pronounced in rural areas, where many Catholics don't have access to priests or registered churches. But Catholics are sometimes still persecuted in the cities, and today more than two dozen underground priests and bishops are reportedly in government custody.

Jin does not dismiss the suffering of underground Catholics, but he seems to believe it's unnecessary, now that the sacraments are available in open churches. Explaining why accommodation, rather than resistance, is the right path for Chinese Catholics, he says his flock is in no position to confront the Chinese government, particularly at the behest of the wealthy overseas supporters of the underground Church. "I don't wait for [the Communist] collapse," he says. "I get things done now." Besides, he adds, from the 1950s onward, he realized that Communist secret police "are everywhere, like God. So we can't do secret activities. It's stupid."

Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Washington, D.C., a friend and admirer of Jin for nearly two decades, told me, "What I like about Jin is that he's very Chinese and very Catholic at the same time." It's why McCarrick calls him "one of the most important churchmen in China of our time." Jin isn't so optimistic about his legacy. "The Vatican thinks that I don't work enough for the Vatican, and the government thinks that I work too much for the Vatican," he says. "It is not easy to satisfy both."

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Jin says that from the beginning his primary interest has been poor Catholics in China, “my Catholics.” Neither Beijing nor Rome has always had their best interests at heart, he suggests, and so he’s tried to step into the breach. In the process, he’s become a different sort of Catholic than he was when he was ordained (by a *French* priest, he points out)—a personal transformation that’s mirrored by the changes at work in China’s growing population of Catholics, both underground and open.

Christianity first reached China in the seventh century, carried by Nestorians via the Silk Road, but it wasn’t until the mid-16th century, with the arrival of the Society of Jesus, that the Catholic Church established a permanent presence in the Middle Kingdom. After that, the faith made substantial inroads, thanks to Matteo Ricci, a brilliant Italian Jesuit who abandoned traditional evangelization techniques in favor of an “enculturated” approach that accommodated traditional Chinese beliefs and rituals, including the commonplace practice of venerating one’s ancestors.

The Jesuits’ tolerance for these “Chinese rites” generated controversy back in Rome, and in 1704, after a century of debate, Pope Clement XI was persuaded by the

yes?”) His family had enrolled him in Shanghai’s Jesuit-run schools, and he entered the order in 1938, the year he turned 22. “I had lost everyone,” he says. “So I looked to be a soldier for God.”

Jin had always seen similarities between Catholicism and Chinese culture. Like many Chinese Christians, he was attracted to the Gospel of John and its mystical concept of Logos—or “the Word,” as embodied in Christ. “The Logos is like Chinese philosophy,” he says, referring to the Tao, a concept sometimes translated as “the Way.” Both the Tao and Logos, he explains, suggest a rational order in the universe, though in the case of Catholicism, that order is revealed physically in the figure of Christ.

Reconciling Chinese philosophy with Catholic theology was easier than reconciling the political demands of his two masters in this world. The year after Jin entered the Jesuit order, Pope Pius XII ended most of the restrictions on the Chinese rites, and in 1946 he established an independent hierarchy for China’s Church, so that it was no longer a missionary project. But there was still tension between being Catholic and being Chinese. As late as 1949, more than 80 percent of China’s dioceses remained under the control of European bishops who had little interest in relinquishing their sees to the Chinese. Like the pope and

Reconciling Catholic theology with Chinese philosophy proved easier for Jin than reconciling the political demands of his two masters.

Jesuits’ rivals to condemn them as hopelessly tainted by superstition. The Chinese emperors, who’d been tolerant of the missionaries, were outraged—as Jin notes, “To be Chinese, it was most important to venerate ancestors”—and during the 1720s missionaries and then Christianity itself were banned in China.

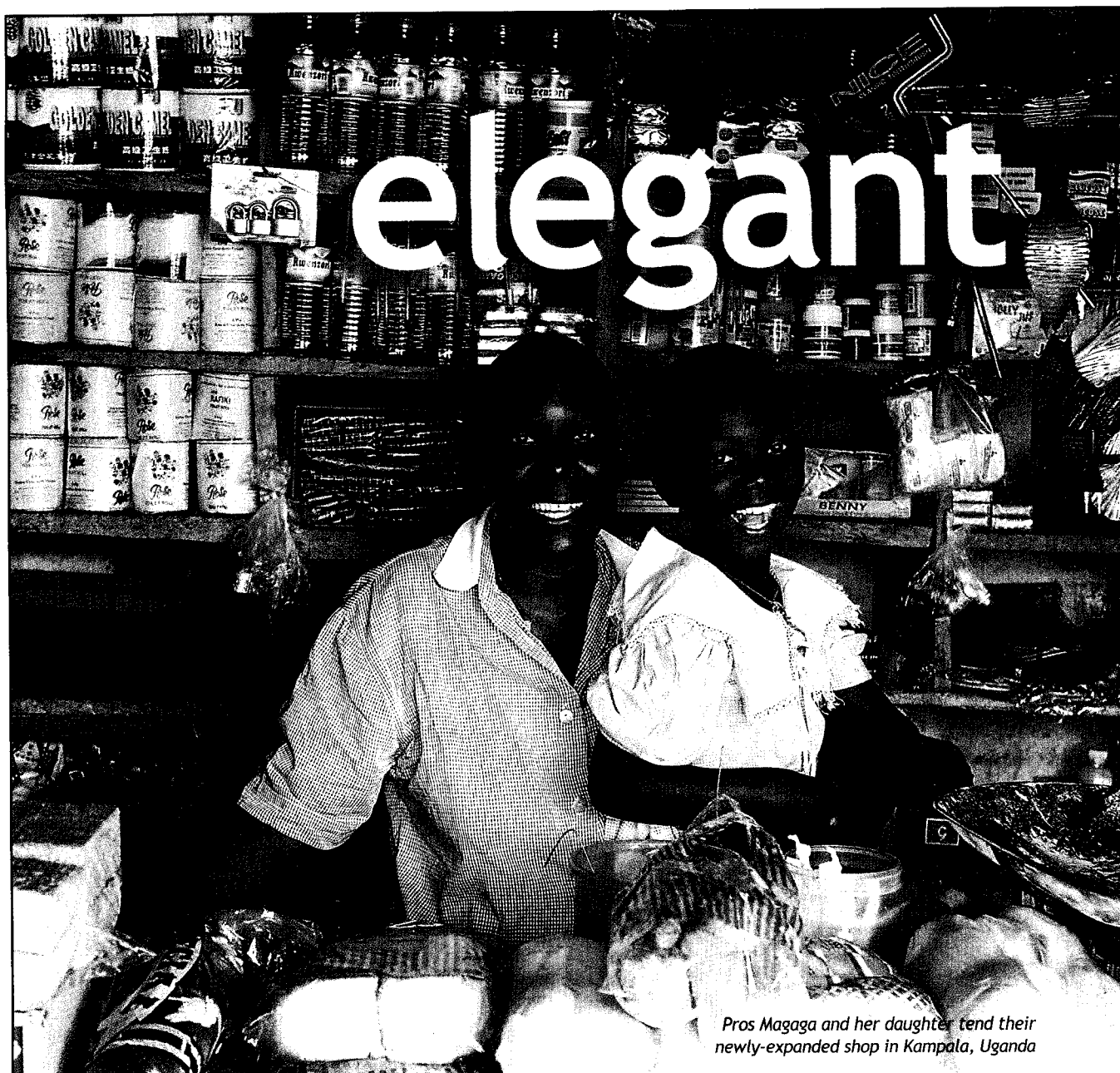
Catholic missionaries reentered China a century later, thanks to the 1842 treaties that opened the Chinese mainland to both opium and European Christians. French Jesuits built their headquarters on the edge of the small fishing village of Shanghai, and soon after raised Shanghai’s first cathedral, a wooden predecessor to St. Ignatius that was completed in 1910. Catholicism—and Christianity in general—grew steadily in China throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, and by the outbreak of World War I, Chinese Catholics numbered 1.2 million.

Jin claims that the first members of his family converted to Catholicism more than 10 generations ago, while they were servants in the house of a Shanghai aristocrat. His childhood was beset by tragedy: At 10 he lost his mother, at 14 his father, and at 18 his only sibling, an older sister. (“And yet I live to a very old age,” he observes. “Very curious,

the Vatican hierarchy, many of these bishops—under the direction of Archbishop Antonio Riberi, the papal inter-nuncio to China—supported Chiang Kai-shek’s Chinese Nationalists, even after 1949, when the Communists triumphed and Chiang’s government fled to Taiwan. That created an identity crisis for Catholics on the mainland, many of whom shared Jin’s perception that the Communist victory marked “the recovery by China of full independence as well as her national self-respect.” As Jin remarked in a 1987 speech to German Catholics, “To remain Catholic, they could not remain Chinese.”

When the Communists swept into power, Jin was in Rome working on his doctorate in theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. By the time he graduated, in 1950, Beijing had begun to restrict religious freedoms and expel foreign missionaries. “I knew that I would be arrested if I returned to China,” Jin says matter-of-factly. He returned anyway. “The missionaries were leaving, and China needed pastors.”

In 1951, in an attempt to persuade the Communists not to view the Church as a hostile, foreign-controlled entity, Jin proposed creating a conference of Chinese bishops



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THE ORDINATION of Joseph Xing Wenzhi, Jin's chosen successor, as the auxiliary bishop of Shanghai

that would run the Church in a manner that reflected Chinese, not European, interests. He was promptly reported to the papal internuncio, whose response, he says with a laugh, was: "This young priest talks nonsense!" Rebuked, Jin spent the next four years as the rector of Shanghai's major seminary, training as many Chinese priests as possible to replace the departed missionaries.

But by then, little could be done to help China's Catholics. The Communists had expelled Riberi in 1951 and officially severed diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Ignatius Kung Pin-mei, the bishop of Shanghai, emerged as China's leading Catholic voice against the Communists. Jin considered Kung a friend but disagreed with his confrontational approach. "Kung believed that the Nationalists would win and come back," he says. "I said, 'No. How? It's a small island—how can they conquer [mainland] China?'"

On September 8, 1955, Kung and Jin were arrested, along with 300 priests, nuns, and laypeople (an additional 800 Catholics were arrested a few weeks later). For the next five years, Jin was kept mostly in solitary confinement in Shanghai, his only human contact with the interrogators and the guards. He was allowed no books or other written materials. When I asked how he survived that period, he smiled and said that he'd memorized the Gospels as a young man. "I kept my faith, by praying and meditating on the Gospels, especially John."

In 1960, Jin was convicted of counterrevolutionary activities and received an 18-year sentence. Kung was convicted of high treason and received a life sentence. Jin spent the ensuing years in various prisons and reeducation

camps, where he worked as a farmer and, off and on, as a translator of foreign documents for the national Public Security Bureau. Ironically, after he finally got access to newspapers during the Cultural Revolution, his hope was shaken in a way it hadn't been when he was in solitary confinement. "I heard that China was an atheist nation—that the missions, churches, Catholics, Buddhist temples, and Islamic mosques were all gone," he says. "And I nearly lost my hope." He pauses. "Almost." Prayer sustained him, as it does today: Every morning, promptly at 7:30, he says a private Mass with a single attendant in the chapel next to his study. "I still pray the rosary," he notes. "Now I have beads, and I didn't in jail."

Though Jin's sentence was completed in the mid-'70s, he remained a political prisoner in northern China until 1982. "I entered [prison] a young man," he says, "and left an old one." He emerged to find a Chinese Church that had been utterly transformed. In July 1957, at the behest of the Communist Party, a small group of Chinese Catholic leaders had held the first meeting of the Catholic Patriotic Association, whose stated policy was to ensure that "Chinese Catholics, cleric and lay, take charge of their own affairs and no longer act contrary to the interests of their country." A year later, two Chinese bishops were ordained without papal approval, and over the next seven years, 49 more would be—until the Cultural Revolution ended the government's limited toleration for religion.

The Vatican saw the ordinations as an affront, and Pope Pius XII wrote an encyclical letter reasserting his right to select bishops—and to excommunicate anyone

who circumvented him. However, neither he nor his successors excommunicated any of the bishops consecrated under Communist supervision. Instead, the Vatican quietly recognized that, despite the illicit procedure, the bishops had been ordained by valid prelates, and thus were valid themselves. According to Anthony S. K. Lam, a scholar of the Chinese Church at Hong Kong's Holy Spirit Study Centre, the "illicit but valid" designation is well-known. "If you are ordained by an illicit but valid bishop, you are a valid bishop," he says. "But only the pope can say you are the bishop of Shanghai."

When Jin emerged from prison in 1982, Shanghai had two bishops: Ignatius Kung Pin-mei, who was still incarcerated, and Aloysius Zhang Jiashu, a 90-year-old Jesuit who'd been consecrated under Communist supervision in 1960. Many in the city's elderly Catholic community held Kung in the highest regard, but Zhang was a more controversial figure. The situation epitomized the larger dilemma facing Chinese Catholics: how to reconcile the Church that had spent more than a generation underground with the Church that was tainted by its links to Communism and estranged from the Holy See.

But an important fact was pushing the two churches toward reconciliation, or at least coexistence: Catholicism was growing. In 1980, China officially had 3 million Catholics (likely an underestimate due to poor census data), the same number it had had in 1949. Today, the best estimates place the Catholic population between 12 million and 15 million. No single explanation accounts for this increase, which is mirrored by the growth of other Christian denominations, but many people, including Jin, think that religion has been filling the vacuum created by the collapse of Marxism's ideological credibility. Whatever the cause, the exploding numbers have reinforced the need to hold the Church in China together, despite the forces that threaten to tear it apart. This is the mission that has defined Jin's career—one that began when he stepped out of prison and onto the tightrope he's walked ever since.

Within a few months of Jin's release, the Communist Central Committee published Document 19, the official policy on religion. Following party dogma, it declared religion to be a historical phenomenon that would disappear once socialism's triumph was complete. In the interim, it called for steps that would strengthen the independence of Chinese religious institutions and insulate them from negative foreign influences, steps that included the reopening of seminaries to train a new generation of patriotic priests.

Under this policy, Jin was asked to take up his old responsibilities as rector of Shanghai's seminary. Though the CPA would be looking over his shoulder, he saw the necessity: In all of China, there were at most 400 priests

to serve 3 million Catholics. He believed that if the Church was to have any chance of survival, China would need young, well-educated priests, even if they were subjected to Communist propaganda during their training. Through a "foreign friend," Jin requested permission from Rome. The response was that he should "wait for the collapse" of the Communist Party, then reopen the seminary. "They underestimated the Chinese Communist Party," says Jin. And so, after "much prayer," he acted in what he believed to be the best interests of China's Catholics. "I didn't obey the directive of Rome. I said, 'Let the Catholic Church survive.'"

Initially at least, there was little to suggest that the seminary was Catholic. Without Vatican support, Jin had to look elsewhere for books and Bibles. "I had to go to Protestants," he says. That set a precedent, and though he says he tries to obtain support and funding from Roman Catholic organizations whenever possible, since the early 1980s the Shanghai diocese has received significant funding for religious publishing and book purchases from non-Catholic Christian organizations sympathetic to his desire "to proclaim the word of God."

Such developments didn't help Jin's already tenuous standing in Rome. "Once, I was present when John Paul [II] was given testimony on the dramatic suffering of the underground in Shanghai," recalls Jerroon Heyndrickx, a Belgian priest who has served as an informal Vatican emissary to the Chinese Church since the early 1980s. "And then you hear that a man like Jin comes out and is officially recognized. That puts him in a very bad light."

Jin's fellow Jesuits in Taiwan were particularly critical of his approach. "In the early '80s they accused me of being a traitor," he says. "They said I was a secret Communist. They accused me of becoming a party member in prison and being a traitor to the Church." Sighing, he adds, "Rome believed it"—for most of the 1980s, "people abroad considered me a Judas."

Despite the negative reports that made their way to Rome, John Paul II showed a strong sympathy for China's Church. As a former bishop of Krakow, he seemed to understand instinctively the compromises made by China's Catholics, and in several speeches and encyclicals, he indicated his support for open as well as underground believers. According to Heyndrickx and two other people who closely observed Vatican China policy in the 1980s, John Paul II and his inner circle developed a positive perception of Jin in the mid-'80s, mostly as a result of reports emanating out of the newly reopened seminary. Heyndrickx recalls being asked by the pope to assess Jin's character, and responding, "If he is not faithful, then neither am I."

Jin's loyalty was put to the test in January 1985, when he was chosen by Shanghai's priests and the CPA to be ordained an auxiliary bishop (an assistant and possible successor) to Bishop Zhang. Few inside or outside of Shanghai believed that it was possible for Jin to remain

a faithful Catholic—at least, a *Roman* Catholic—if he accepted the ordination. Yet Jin believed that to reject the appointment would not only place the seminary at risk but also open the Shanghai hierarchy to a priest more inclined toward the CPA and the Communist Party. Reluctantly, he accepted, and he says that on the day of the ordination, he was in need of “consolation.”

It arrived from an unlikely source: With Pope John Paul’s knowledge and tacit approval, Laurence Murphy, a past president of Seton Hall University and an informal intermediary and adviser to the Vatican on the Chinese Church, and Father John Tong, now the auxiliary bishop of Hong Kong, attended the ceremony. “That was kind of delicate,” Murphy told me, recalling that St. Ignatius was filled with “brass from the CPA.” Jin concedes that there might have been serious consequences had the CPA been aware of a Vatican-approved presence, and he admitted that Murphy and Tong had attended the ordination only after I asked him to confirm Murphy’s account. “It was not encouraged by me,” he said defensively. “I did not apply for that.” After a pause, he added, “They encouraged me, and it was helpful and consolation.”

In 1982, shortly after he was released from prison, Jin petitioned the government to allow him to visit the imprisoned Bishop Kung. He was allowed to make three visits before Kung was released, in 1985 (with Jin signing a personal guarantee of his good behavior). Kung lived in Shanghai under house arrest, accepting visitors and maintaining friendly relations with Jin, who says Kung was “like a brother” at the time. Then in 1988, the same year that Bishop Zhang died and Jin succeeded him as the government-approved head of the Shanghai diocese, Kung received permission to seek medical treatment abroad, and after it was completed, he went into exile, living at his nephew’s home in Connecticut.

According to an American Church official involved in making the Vatican’s China policy, the Vatican strongly preferred that Kung remain in China, because it believed that he was uniquely positioned to heal the rift in China’s Church. Instead, against the wishes of John Paul II but with the tacit support of high-ranking Vatican officials who sympathized with the underground, Kung, working with his nephew, began deepening the rift. The situation grew even more confused when it was revealed that the pope had named Kung a cardinal *in pectore*—“in secret”—in 1979, during his imprisonment. Kung and his nephew formed the Cardinal Kung Foundation, a U.S.-based nonprofit that supports and agitates on behalf of the underground Church. For Jin, a favorite target of foundation attacks, Kung’s status and activities were an affront. “Cardinal Kung pushes all of the Catholics against the Chinese Communist Party, then he moves to the United States,” he says. “Very nice for him.” Jin has

traveled abroad extensively (the government allows him to go anywhere but Rome), and he likes to point out that he too has plenty of “foreign friends” who could support him in exile if he chose that.

Instead, Jin used his standing as a bishop to begin the reforms that he’d wanted to see in China’s Church since the 1940s. In 1988, he made six trips to Beijing in hopes of persuading the Religious Affairs Bureau to, among other things, allow him to include a prayer for the pope in his diocese’s services; he obtained permission on the sixth visit. The next year, he received permission to have two Hong Kong priests and an American priest teach at the seminary. Soon after their arrival, the priests began preparing the seminarians to say Mass in the vernacular, and on September 30, 1989, the first Chinese-language Mass was celebrated in Shanghai. Father Joseph Zen, a Shanghai native and now the cardinal archbishop of Hong Kong, was the celebrant. The risk was significant: China’s religious authorities reserved the right to approve changes to the liturgy, and they’d long preferred Latin, largely because it couldn’t be understood by most Chinese.

Over the next several months, Jin says, he quietly ordered his priests and seminarians to take the new liturgy to Shanghai’s other churches. “Jin was the one who had the guts to implement the Mass,” says Father Thomas Law, a Hong Kong liturgist who was involved in the Mass at the chapel. “Nobody else.” The Chinese-language Mass wasn’t officially authorized on a national level until 1993. Soon afterward, the Shanghai diocese published its own translation, which was quickly disseminated throughout the country.

It was characteristic Jin. He has keen political instincts, and throughout his career he’s been able to use his standing as an open-Church bishop to achieve things that he never could have done in the underground Church. Though Jin won’t discuss his relationships with Chinese officials, those close to him claim that he has good relations at a very high level in Beijing and Shanghai. It’s a delicate balancing act, says Jerrold Heyndrickx: “He had to say things that sound correct to the regime that also protect his church.”

During one of our interviews, Jin contrasted himself with the outspoken Joseph Zen, who has become a well-known agitator against the CPA since taking over as archbishop of Hong Kong. “You cannot speak out as a bishop in a Communist country,” Jin says. “I can’t freely speak like Zen, because I must protect my diocese.” Withholding criticism of China’s religious authorities and their policies is perhaps the greatest compromise that the open-Church bishops choose to make.

At the same time, there are lines that Jin won’t cross. In the early 1990s, for instance, he was offered the chairmanship of the government-organized Chinese bishops’ conference, but declined the overture because he thought it would compromise his independence. The role was later

assumed by Beijing's Bishop Fu Tieshen, who, after his death in April 2007, was widely criticized for being little more than a mouthpiece for the Communist Party.

In conversation, Jin exhibits few doubts about his decisions, but occasionally his answers turn defensive. During one of our interviews, I asked about his impressions of the underground Church. He began to answer, then suddenly interrupted himself. "[The members of the underground Church] say they are loyal to the pope," he said. "But I am as loyal as them. Why become bishop? I led the [Chinese] Catholics to pray for the pope and even printed the prayer! I reformed the liturgy. Before me, it was all in Latin. But the underground Church did nothing. If I stayed with them, I would do nothing, too."

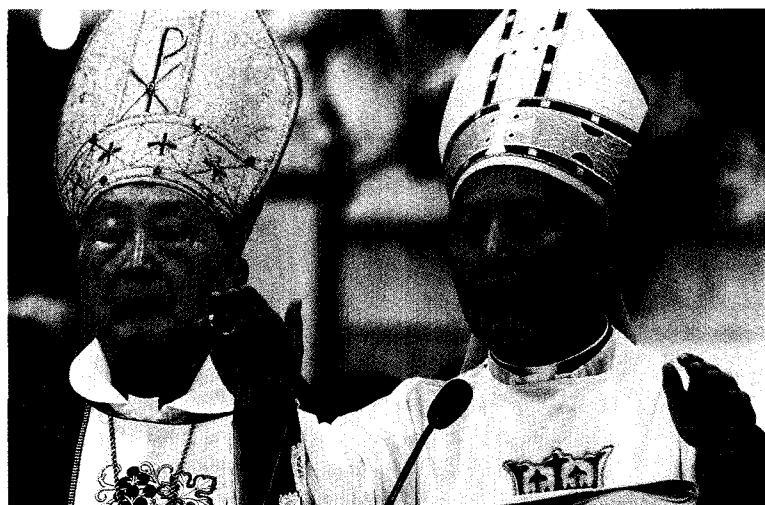
Cardinal McCarrick told me that he and Jin had a routine during the 1990s: "I would tell him, 'I am going to visit the holy father soon. Is there anything that you would like me to tell him?' And he would answer, 'Tell the holy father that he has my prayers and blessings.' And I would ask, 'Anything else?' And he would answer, 'And the blessings of my priests, sisters, and congregations.' And anything else? And he would pause and say, 'Not at this time.'"

During the 1990s, according to several of his friends, Jin was frustrated that despite his accomplishments, he could not be recognized as the rightful bishop of Shanghai. (By 2000, roughly two-thirds of the open-Church bishops were reconciled with Rome.) Laurence Murphy says the reason was that Jin was unwilling to communicate, in writing or orally, that he was loyal to the pope. "Along with many others, he believed that the Vatican had been infiltrated by the Communists," says Murphy. "And they didn't want to trust anything to that bureaucracy, because they thought, 'In 24 hours it will be known in Beijing.'"

Many in the Vatican doubted Jin's loyalties well into the 1990s, in part because of allegations made by the Kung Foundation and others sympathetic to the underground Church. Kung himself ultimately refused to meet Jin in the United States, even though the Vatican had asked them to sit down together and try to repair the divide. Kung died in exile in 1999, and his auxiliary, Fan Zhongliang (who lived in Shanghai), succeeded him.

In 2000, at the behest of the Vatican, Fan visited Jin at his office in the basilica near the seminary. At the time, both bishops were in their 80s, and the Vatican had asked them to agree upon a successor. Their candidate would be submitted to the pope, then presented to the diocese's priests for election and to the CPA for approval. At the very least, the Vatican intended to make clear that the auxiliary bishop would be an open-Church bishop, and that Fan—as an underground bishop—would have no successor. And if all went as planned, the two faces of Shanghai's Church could be officially unified.

Fan proposed a priest who Jin says "didn't know the diocese, and the diocese didn't know him." Jin's preferred candidate, Joseph Xing Wenzhi, was unacceptable to Fan. During the years that followed, Fan became incapacitated by Alzheimer's, a turn of events that Heyndrickx says gave the Vatican the opportunity to secretly recognize Jin as the *de jure* bishop of Shanghai (in the Vatican's eyes, Jin is officially the coadjutor of the diocese). Jin will neither confirm nor deny that status, but it's unquestioned among Church leaders in Europe and North America, and it was tacitly acknowledged at the June 2005 public consecration of Xing as Jin's auxiliary. Had Jin not been reconciled with Rome, Xing's ordination would have been declared illicit. Instead, it was attended by Vatican emissaries, hundreds of laypeople from the underground Church, several underground priests, and more than a dozen government representatives.



THE PAST AND THE FUTURE: Jin and Xing

In the months surrounding Xing's ordination, Beijing hinted that the ascension of Pope Benedict XVI might offer an opportunity for a deal with Rome, and Benedict seemed to signal a desire to work with the Communist government. That September, he personally invited four mainland Chinese bishops, including Jin, to attend the Synod of the Eucharist in Rome the following month. The government refused on the bishops' behalf, decrying Vatican interference in China's affairs, but the point had been made: Jin and the two other open-Church bishops were legitimate in the eyes of the new pope. Jin left the Vatican's letter of invitation on his desk for a month, explaining to anyone who asked that it "justified everything [he] had done."

Then, as now, Beijing had two conditions for normalizing relations with the Vatican: the severing of the Vatican's diplomatic ties with Taiwan (and as a consequence, the transfer of its embassy to the mainland) and an agreement not to interfere in China's internal affairs. The Vatican

has indicated that it's prepared to meet the Taiwan condition, but the second issue, which encompasses the selection of bishops, is more difficult. Informally, the Vatican might be satisfied with a compromise similar to the process used to nominate Xing in Shanghai. However, public declarations to the contrary, it's been suggested that both the government and the underground Church have a tacit interest in preventing a deal, since it would inevitably empower the open bishops and their conference, diminishing the government's influence and the underground Church's prestige.

Whether an immediate way can be found through the impasse may depend on what Benedict XVI has to say in a promised letter to Chinese Catholics. Leaked reports and the impressions of a source close to the drafting of the letter suggest that it will call, as John Paul II did, for reconciliation between the open and underground churches, and focus largely on pastoral concerns. Ultimately, it's expected to portray China's Catholics as largely united after a half

Trained as a traditional porcelain painter, Wo was working as a newspaper art director. The two became fast friends, and Jin invited her to work for the Shanghai diocese as an artist. Since she had no training in church art, he offered to send her abroad for nearly a decade of study at Catholic institutions in Italy and the United States. Wo agreed, a first step toward restoring the stained glass.

In 2001, after Wo returned to China, formal planning for the project began. Work started the following year, with Wo supervising a staff of nuns from the diocese, and in the fall of 2006, they completed the first stage: 44 windows in ground-level nave chapels depicting the life of Jesus.

The results look nothing like the stained-glass windows of Europe. Images of Christ's life are executed as variations on traditional Chinese paper cutouts, and the surrounding grillwork is based on Qing Dynasty window designs found in a busy Shanghai market. Chinese iconography complements the Gospel story—a magpie

If rapprochement between Rome and Beijing occurs suddenly, China's Church would be reunited, which would smooth over old divisions—but also reopen old wounds.

century and to acknowledge that any diplomatic solution will need to accommodate both the vitality of the open Church and the struggles of the underground one.

Jin has watched the diplomatic ebb and flow between Rome and Beijing for 20 years, and he's pessimistic about the short-term prospects for a deal. If he's wrong, and rapprochement occurs suddenly, China's Church could change dramatically: The Chinese hierarchy—still split between underground and open bishops in many dioceses—would be reunited, which could smooth over divisions within the Church, but also reopen old wounds. For now, though, Jin's attempt at an intermediate way still seems likely to chart the future for China's Catholics.

Of the many goals that Bishop Jin set for himself after leaving prison, none was more personal than the restoration of Shanghai's cathedral. Over the two decades that followed, the steeples were replaced, the walls and columns were repaired, and a new altar was built. But cost constraints meant that the hundreds of Gothic window frames had to be filled with clear, rather than stained, glass. Even so, Jin did not give up hope that he might once again see the church lit with a mysterious glow, as it had been in his youth.

In 1991, while in Beijing on Church business, Jin was introduced to Wo Ye, the then 28-year-old daughter of Communist Party officials and a recent convert to Catholicism.

represents the birth of Christ, a coiled phoenix represents the risen Christ—and blazing Chinese characters explain the scenes. Over the next several years, the plan is to fill the upper-level windows with a golden bamboo garden meant to represent paradise and the middle level with figures important to China's Church, rendered in a fashion that suggests traditional Chinese painting. "The old church appealed to 3 million Catholics," says Jin. "I want to appeal to 100 million Catholics."

During my last interview with Jin, Wo stopped by the office to say hello, settling into a chair beside the bishop. The conversation drifted, and Jin told a story that neither Wo nor I had heard before. In the late 1980s, he said, the Italian government invited him to Rome. Zhou Ziyang, then China's prime minister, gave him permission to go. "The Chinese say, 'Go and get the real feeling of the Holy See toward China,'" Jin said. "At the time, Zhou Ziyang was ready to normalize relations." The Vatican was not. "Rome refused me."

A priest close to the Vatican later wrote to me to say that he'd heard this "rumor" and speculated that Rome had refused permission because of Jin's poor standing with people in Shanghai's underground Church. Jin didn't tell me this. Instead, he looked across the room at Wo, smiled, and asked when the cathedral would be completed.

"In time," she answered. ▀

Adam Minter is an American writer in Shanghai.

INSPIRED THINKING IN AN IDYLIC SETTING

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Why America's growing nuclear supremacy may make war with China more likely

BY KEIR A. LIEBER AND DARYL G. PRESS

Illustration by Istvan Banyai

Superiority Complex

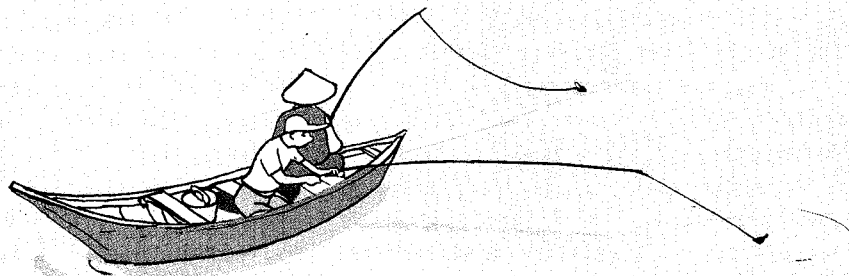
In the coming years, as China's economy booms and its armed forces grow, the United States will seek to curb Chinese military power and influence. The U.S.-China rivalry is poised to become the world's most dangerous strategic relationship. Optimists might contend that the pacifying effects of economic integration will forestall outright hostility and conflict between Washington and Beijing. Others would argue that the strategic competition itself augurs peace and stability

between the superpowers, because each country's arsenal of nuclear weapons constitutes a security blanket: Just as the danger of mutual nuclear annihilation—or mutual assured destruction (MAD), as it was labeled then—helped prevent war between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, so too will nuclear deterrence cool tensions between the United States and China.

But little about the emerging nuclear balance between the United States and China should lead anyone to assume a similar stabilizing effect. The United States is pursuing capabilities that are rendering MAD obsolete, and the resulting nuclear *imbalance* of power could dramatically exacerbate America's rivalry with China.

In the 1990s, with the Cold War receding, nuclear weapons appeared to be relics. Russian and Chinese leaders apparently thought so. Russia allowed its arsenal to decline precipitously, and China showed little interest in modernizing its nuclear weapons. The small strategic force that China built and deployed in the 1970s and early 1980s is essentially the same one it has today.

But meanwhile, the United States steadily improved its "counterforce" capabilities—those nuclear weapons most effective at targeting an enemy's nuclear arsenal. Even as it reduced the number of weapons in its nuclear arsenal, the U.S. made its remaining weapons more lethal and accurate. The result today is a global nuclear imbalance unseen in 50 years. And nowhere is U.S. nuclear



primacy clearer—or potentially more important—than in the Sino-U.S. relationship.

China has approximately 80 operationally deployed nuclear warheads, but only a few of them—those assigned to single-warhead DF-5 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)—can reach the continental United States. (There is no definitive, unclassified count of China's DF-5 ICBMs, but official U.S. statements have put the number at 18.) China has neither modern nuclear ballistic-missile submarines nor long-range nuclear bombers. Moreover, China's ICBMs can't be quickly launched; the warheads are stored separately, and the missiles are kept unfueled. (Unlike the solid fuel used in U.S. missiles, the liquid fuel used to propel Chinese ICBMs is highly corrosive.) Finally, China lacks an advanced early-warning system that would give Beijing reliable notice of an incoming attack.

This small arsenal fulfilled China's strategic requirements in the 20th century, but it is now obsolete. The current Chinese force was designed for a different era: when China was a poor nation with a limited role on the world stage, and when U.S. and Soviet missiles were too inaccurate to carry out a disarming strike—even against Beijing's small force. But China's international presence is expanding, and America's counterforce capabilities have soared. Moreover, one of the biggest constraints that would deter American leaders from contemplating a disarming strike is fading away. In the past, a U.S. preemptive attack would have generated horrific civilian casualties, but that may soon cease to be the case.

How the United States achieved nuclear dominance after the Soviet Union collapsed is an open secret. The Navy refitted its entire fleet of nuclear-armed submarines with new, highly accurate Trident II missiles and replaced many of the 100-kiloton W76 warheads on these missiles with 455-kiloton W88 warheads. (One kiloton is the explosive energy released by 1,000 tons of TNT.) The result is an unprecedented combination of accuracy and destructive power, essential for an attack on hardened silos. The Navy also recently tested a GPS guidance system that would dramatically boost the accuracy, and thus lethality, of the submarine missile arsenal.

For its part, the Air Force has improved the guidance systems of land-based Minuteman III missiles. Many of these missiles are also being "retipped" with more-powerful warheads—and more-accurate reentry vehicles—taken from recently retired MX ("Peacekeeper") missiles. The Air Force has also upgraded the avionics on B-2 bombers. These nuclear-mission-capable bombers are already "stealthy," but the upgrades improve the planes' ability to penetrate enemy airspace secretly, by flying very low and using the terrain to shield them from radar.

Perhaps as important, the United States is pursuing a slew of nonnuclear weapons that will provide officials options they may find more palatable if they decide to

attack an adversary's nuclear arsenal. These include precision "bunker buster" conventional bombs, high-speed long-range cruise missiles, and conventionally armed ballistic missiles—each of which could be used to destroy enemy missile silos. Furthermore, Washington is undertaking initiatives—including advances in antisatellite warfare and in wide-area remote sensing, designed to find "relocatable" mobile missile launchers—that will make China's nuclear forces vulnerable. Even a missile-defense system substantially boosts U.S. offensive counterforce capabilities. Critics of this system are right in claiming that it could not shield America from even a modest nuclear attack (e.g., 25 warheads), because it would be easily overwhelmed by decoy warheads and the "penetration aids" that would accompany an adversary's missiles. But it could enhance *offensive* nuclear capabilities, by "mopping up" a small number of incoming warheads that survived a U.S. first strike.

America's growing counterforce power reflects its concern about China's emergence as what Pentagon planners call a "peer competitor." In 2006, the Pentagon warned: "Of the major and emerging powers, China has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States." Not surprisingly, the U.S. is pursuing dominance over China across the military spectrum—building up its conventional-warfare, space-warfare, and information-warfare capabilities, as well as its missile-defense and offensive nuclear-strike systems.

Changes in war plans and shifts in the location of nuclear forces confirm that American nuclear upgrades are linked to the perception that China may become a threat. In 1997, the Clinton administration made the first major change in presidential guidance for nuclear-war plans since the early 1980s, broadening the spectrum of Chinese targets. Leaked excerpts from the Pentagon's 2001 Nuclear Posture Review called for the United States to be prepared to use nuclear weapons against China. And the head of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency, Lieutenant General Henry A. Obering III, acknowledged that his agency's plans are not entirely focused on "rogue states" or the "axis of evil." In fact, the Missile Defense Agency also plans for Chinese contingencies. Perhaps the most concrete sign of the increased prominence of China in U.S. nuclear-war plans is the transfer of five nuclear-armed submarines from their Atlantic base at Kings Bay, Georgia, to the Pacific base at Bangor, Washington; two-thirds of the U.S. strategic submarine fleet is now based in the Pacific. Finally, in May 2006, it was reported that the Pentagon had adopted a new war plan to defend Taiwan from a Chinese attack by striking Chinese targets, potentially with nuclear weapons. Of course, it's difficult to ascertain Washington's intentions, but as a 2003 Rand report on the future U.S. nuclear arsenal concluded, "What the planned force appears best suited to provide beyond the needs of traditional deterrence is a *preemptive counterforce capability against Russia and China*."

Otherwise, the numbers and the operating procedures simply do not add up” (emphasis in original).

These changes do not mean that the United States is adopting a nuclear first-strike strategy—it strongly prefers to fight any future wars without resorting to nuclear weapons. Rather, the United States is honing its nuclear capabilities for three broad purposes: to deter conventional or nuclear attacks, to strengthen its leverage against nuclear-armed adversaries during high-stakes crises or wars, and to give itself better nuclear options in dire circumstances.

NUCLEAR WAR-FIGHTING OPTIONS

From a military perspective, this modernization has paid off: A U.S. nuclear first strike could quickly destroy China’s strategic nuclear arsenal. Whether launched in peacetime or during a crisis, a preemptive strike would likely leave China with no means of nuclear retaliation against American territory. And given the trends in both arsenals, China may live under the shadow of U.S. nuclear primacy for years to come.

This assessment is based on unclassified information, standard targeting principles, and formulas that defense analysts have used for decades. (And we systematically chose conservative estimates for key unknowns, meaning that our analysis understates U.S. counterforce capabilities.) The simplest version of an American preemptive strike would have nuclear-armed submarines in the Pacific launch Trident II missiles at the Chinese ICBM field in Henan province. The Navy keeps at least two of these submarines on “hard alert” in the Pacific at all times, meaning they’re ready to fire within 15 minutes of a launch order. Since each submarine carries 24 nuclear-tipped missiles with an average of six warheads per missile, commanders have almost 300 warheads ready for immediate use. This is more than enough to assign multiple warheads to each of the 18 Chinese silos. Chinese leaders would have little or no warning of the attack.

During the Cold War, U.S. submarines posed little danger to China’s silos, or to any other hardened targets. Each warhead on the Trident I missiles had little chance—roughly 12 percent—of success. Not only were those missiles inaccurate, their warheads had a relatively small yield. (Similarly, until the late 1980s, U.S. ICBMs lacked the accuracy to carry out a reliable disarming attack against China.) But the Navy’s new warheads and missiles are far more lethal. A Trident II missile is so accurate, and the newer W88 warhead so powerful, that if the warhead and missile function normally, the destruction of the silo is virtually assured (the likelihood is calculated as greater than 99 percent).

In reality, American planners could not assume such near-perfect results. Some missiles or warheads could malfunction: One missile’s rockets might fail to ignite; another’s guidance system might be defective. So a realistic counterforce plan might assign four warheads to each silo.

The U.S. would “cross-target” the missiles, meaning that the warheads on each missile would each go to different silos, so that a silo would be spared only if many missiles malfunctioned. Even assuming that 20 percent of missiles malfunctioned—the standard, conservative assumption typically used by nuclear analysts—there is a 97 percent chance that every Chinese DF-5 silo would be destroyed in a 4-on-1 attack. (By comparison, a similar attack using Cold War-era Trident I missiles would have produced less than a 1 percent chance of success. The leap in American counterforce capabilities since the end of the Cold War is staggering.)

Beyond bolstering the ability to conduct a first strike, the improvements to U.S. counterforce weapons also allow war planners to design nuclear options that will make the weapons more “usable” during high-stakes crises. Nuclear planners face many choices when they consider striking a given target. First, they must choose a warhead yield. The American arsenal includes low-yield weapons such as the B-61 bomb, which can detonate with as little explosive force as 0.3 kilotons (one-fiftieth the power of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima), and high-yield weapons such as the B-83 bomb, which can yield 1,200 kilotons (80 times the strength of the Hiroshima bomb). For a military planner, high-yield weapons are attractive because they’re very likely to destroy the target—even if the weapon misses by some distance. Low-yield warheads, on the other hand, can be more discriminating, if planners want to minimize civilian casualties.

A second key decision for war planners is whether to set the weapon to detonate at ground level or in the air above the target. A groundburst creates enormous overpressure and ground shock, ideal for destroying a hardened target. But groundbursts also create a lot of radioactive fallout. Dirt and other matter is sucked up into the mushroom cloud, mixes with radioactive material, and, after being carried by the wind, falls to earth in the hours after the blast, spreading lethal radiation.

Airbursts create smaller zones of extremely high overpressure, but they also generate very little fallout. If the detonation occurs above a threshold altitude (which depends on the weapon yield), virtually no heavy particles from the ground mix with the radioactive material in the fireball. The radioactive material rises into the high atmosphere and then falls to earth over the course of several weeks in a far less dangerous state and over a very wide area, greatly reducing the harm to civilians.

In the past, a nuclear attack on China’s arsenal would have had horrific humanitarian consequences. The weapons were less accurate, so an effective strike would have required multiple high-yield warheads, detonating on the ground, against each target. The Federation of American Scientists and the Natural Resources Defense Council modeled the consequences of such an attack—similar to

the submarine attack described above—and published their findings in 2006. The results were sobering. Although China's long-range missiles are deployed in a lightly populated region, lethal fallout from an attack would travel hundreds of miles and kill more than 3 million Chinese civilians. American leaders might have contemplated such a strike, but only in the most dire circumstances.

But things are changing radically. Improved accuracy now allows war planners to target hardened sites with low-yield warheads and even airbursts. And the United States is pushing its breakthroughs in accuracy even further. For example, for many years America has used global-positioning systems in conjunction with onboard inertial-guidance systems to improve the accuracy of its conventionally armed (that is, nonnuclear) cruise missiles. Although an adversary may jam the GPS signal near likely targets, the cruise missiles use GPS along their flight route and then—if they lose the signal—use their backup inertial-guidance system for the final few kilometers. This approach has dramatically improved a cruise missile's accuracy and could be applied to nuclear-armed cruise missiles as well. The United States is deploying jam-resistant GPS receivers on other weapons, experimenting with GPS on its nuclear-armed ballistic missiles, and planning to deploy a new generation of GPS satellites—with higher-powered signals to complicate jamming.

The payoff for equipping cruise missiles (or nuclear bombs) with GPS is clear when one estimates the civilian casualties from a lower-yield, airburst attack. We asked Matthew McKinzie, a scientific consultant to the Natural Resources Defense Council and coauthor of the 2006 study, to rerun the analysis using low-yield detonations compatible with nuclear weapons currently in the U.S. arsenal. Using three warheads per target to increase the odds of destroying every silo, the model predicts fewer than 1,000 Chinese casualties from fallout. In some low-yield scenarios, fewer than 100 Chinese would be killed or injured from fallout. The model is better suited to predicting fallout casualties than to forecasting deaths from the blast and fire, but given the low population in the rural region where the silos are, Chinese fatalities would be fewer than 6,000 in even the most destructive scenario we modeled. And in the future, there may be reliable nonnuclear options for destroying Chinese silos. Freed from the burden of killing millions, a U.S. president staring at the threat of a Chinese nuclear attack on U.S. forces, allies, or territory might be more inclined to choose preemptive action.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE NUCLEAR IMBALANCE

The most plausible flash point for a serious U.S.-China conflict is Taiwan. Suppose Taiwan declared independence. China has repeatedly warned that such a move would provoke an attack, probably a major air and

naval campaign to shatter Taiwan's defenses and leave the island vulnerable to conquest. If the United States decided to defend Taiwan, American forces would likely thwart China's offensive, since aerial and naval warfare are strengths of the U.S. military. But looming defeat would place great pressure on China's leaders. Losing the war might mean permanently losing Taiwan. This would undermine the domestic legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party, which increasingly relies on the appeal of nationalism to justify its rule. A crippling defeat would also strain relations between political leaders in Beijing and the Chinese military. To stave off a regime-threatening disaster, the political leaders might decide to raise the stakes by placing part of the Chinese nuclear force on alert in hopes of coercing the United States into accepting a negotiated solution (for example, a return to Taiwan's pre-declaration status).

By putting its nuclear forces on alert, however, China's leaders would compel a U.S. president to make a very difficult decision: to accede to blackmail (by agreeing to a cease-fire and pressuring the Taiwanese to renounce independence), to assume that the threat is a bluff (a dangerous proposition, given that each Chinese ICBM carries a city-busting 4,000-kiloton warhead), or to strike the Chinese missiles before they could be launched.

How do America's growing counterforce capabilities affect this scenario? First, American nuclear primacy may prevent such a war in the first place. China's leaders understand that their military now has little hope of defeating U.S. air and naval forces. If they also recognize that their nuclear arsenal is vulnerable—and that placing it on alert might trigger a preemptive strike—the leaders may conclude that war is a no-win proposition.

Second, if a war over Taiwan started anyway, U.S. nuclear primacy might help contain the fighting at the conventional level. Early in the crisis, Washington could quietly convey to Beijing that the United States would act decisively if China put its vulnerable nuclear arsenal on alert.

Finally, if China threatened to launch nuclear attacks against America's allies, its territory, or its forces in Asia, nuclear primacy would make a preemptive first strike more palatable to U.S. leaders. Any decision to attack China's ICBM force, though, would be fraught with danger. A missile silo might have escaped detection. Furthermore, a strike on China's 18 ICBMs would leave Beijing with roughly 60 shorter-range nuclear missiles with which to retaliate against U.S. forces and allies in the region. However, in the aftermath of a "clean" disarming strike—one that killed relatively few Chinese—American leaders could credibly warn that a Chinese nuclear response would trigger truly devastating consequences, meaning nuclear attacks against a broader target set, including military, government, and possibly even urban centers. In light of warnings from Chinese defense analysts and from within China's military that it might use nuclear weapons to avoid losing Taiwan, an

American president might feel compelled to strike first. In this terrible circumstance, he or she would reap the benefits of the past decade's counterforce upgrades.

But America's growing counterforce strength is a double-edged sword. To date, China's nuclear modernization has progressed very slowly. Beijing is working to deploy new mobile ICBMs and ballistic-missile submarines, but U.S. estimates of when these systems will become operational have repeatedly been pushed back. However, as China's role in the world changes, and especially as its leaders come to appreciate American counterforce capabilities, Beijing will face increasing pressure to accelerate and expand these programs—and it may already be doing so. Because America has spent decades honing its antisubmarine-warfare skills and technology, a few new Chinese nuclear-armed submarines wouldn't substantially reduce Beijing's vulnerability. A more attractive path would be to deploy hundreds of new mobile missiles. Of course, U.S. officials would likely view deployment of these missiles as a sign of growing bellicosity—and, amid worsening relations, would undertake additional military preparations.

that their radar coverage has been heavily damaged, Chinese leaders would feel tremendous pressure to put their nuclear forces on alert, especially those that can be dispersed (that is, their medium-range mobile missiles). These steps could trigger a U.S. escalation.

The previous period of American nuclear primacy—the 1950s and early 1960s—illustrates some of the strategic implications of such preeminence. The United States was able to force the Soviet Union to concede during a series of crises over Berlin from 1958 to 1961. At the peak of the 1961 Berlin crisis, President Kennedy carefully explored launching a surprise nuclear attack to disarm Soviet forces. Soviet leaders, although unaware of these deliberations, knew that any escalation was a losing proposition for them, and they backed down.

Also telling is the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. The U.S. strategic nuclear advantage helps explain why the Soviet Union sought to place missiles in Cuba in the first place: The Soviets had very few missiles that were capable of reaching American cities. But U.S. nuclear primacy—albeit eroding by 1962—also contributed to the Soviet decision

American efforts to permanently secure nuclear primacy might encourage what defense experts call “crisis instability” and increase the chance of inadvertent escalation.

Furthermore, American efforts to permanently secure nuclear primacy might encourage what defense experts call “crisis instability” and increase the chance of an inadvertent escalation. If China doesn't redress its nuclear vulnerability in peacetime, it may feel great pressure to do so during a brewing crisis or conventional war—simply to protect its forces. But a Chinese decision to arm a portion of its ICBM force, or to disperse its shorter-range mobile nuclear missiles, might be misinterpreted by the U.S. as nuclear blackmail or preparation for a nuclear attack (for example, on American military bases in Asia). Such a step could trigger the preemptive attack that the Chinese action was meant to forestall.

The greatest dangers of nuclear escalation, however, would arise during a conventional military confrontation between the U.S. and China. Contemporary American military doctrine is designed to rattle and confuse an adversary by degrading and overwhelming its command apparatus. Since at least 1991, a high priority in U.S. air campaigns has been to deny the enemy “situational awareness” by targeting its electricity supply, communications infrastructure, radar sites, and military-command bunkers. This may help win conventional battles, but it's counterproductive if the goal is to prevent nuclear escalation. Glimpsing only a confused picture of the battlefield, and knowing

to withdraw the missiles, because Khrushchev believed the United States was prepared to launch a major war, including massive nuclear strikes, against the Soviet Union.

America's nuclear primacy over China likely will have similarly beneficial and dangerous consequences. Optimists might find solace in the argument that nuclear primacy is irrelevant. Perhaps China's leaders will feel no pressure to build new arms in peacetime or to escalate in wartime, because they believe the United States would never risk launching a counterforce strike. According to this view, the mere possibility that a disarming strike could fail—for example, because of faulty U.S. intelligence about Chinese targets—is more than enough to deter U.S. leaders. Chinese leaders have been satisfied with a small nuclear arsenal for decades precisely because they're convinced that no sane leader in Washington (or Moscow) would risk losing a city over a foreign territorial dispute. China can therefore continue to stand pat. If Beijing doesn't put its nuclear forces on alert during a crisis, U.S. leaders won't be tempted to escalate.

One problem with this argument is that it underestimates the importance that the Chinese have always placed on the survivability of their nuclear arsenal. During the Cold War, China configured its small arsenal to survive a disarming strike from its likeliest adversary—the Soviet

Union. China deployed medium-range missiles, capable of reaching Russia, on mobile launchers and hid others in caves. As Chinese leaders recognize that the United States is developing ever-more-discriminating nuclear and conventional options, they will feel great pressure to enlarge and protect their forces. The optimists' argument also ignores the prospect that Chinese leaders may rationally choose to put their arsenal on alert during a crisis—and inadvertently trigger an escalation. The Taiwan situation poses a fundamental danger: The balance of power favors Washington, but the balance of interests favors Beijing. Just as the United States hopes that its military dominance will deter China from attacking Taiwan—or at least deter China from escalating to the nuclear level during a war—China might reasonably assume that its dedication to preventing the breakup of what it sees as the Chinese homeland will ultimately compel the United States to back down.

Finally, the notion that the United States would never consider a disarming attack because of the risk of failure underestimates the power of fear during a crisis. Facing 18 alerted Chinese ICBMs, U.S. leaders may take actions that seemed too risky to contemplate during peacetime.

nuclear-tipped cruise missiles, and all nuclear warheads that can be set to detonate at low yields. Similarly, it could stop experimenting with GPS-guided nuclear delivery systems. And it could cancel plans to develop new long-range conventional weapons that would threaten China's nuclear arsenal. Such decisions would come at a real cost: They would weaken U.S. coercive leverage in crises involving nuclear-armed adversaries, and they would leave future presidents who find themselves in dire circumstances with few palatable counterforce options—meaning options that wouldn't kill millions of civilians. On the other hand, these steps might avert an arms race with China and prevent a dangerous spiraling of events during a crisis. During the latter decades of the Cold War, key measures of American nuclear-force structure were matters of intense public debate. They should be again.

More broadly, U.S. policy makers and analysts need to confront challenging questions about military strategy and foreign policy in an era of nuclear primacy. How should the United States plan to fight conventional wars against nuclear powers in a way that minimizes the odds of an inadvertent escalation? Will the United States need

Contemporary American military doctrine is designed to rattle and confuse an adversary; this is counterproductive if the goal is to prevent nuclear escalation.

A war game is not war, of course, and it is impossible to know how a nuclear standoff, over Taiwan or any other flash point, would unfold in real life. It is equally hard to know what China's leaders—the current ones or their successors—will decide about their deterrent posture. But it would be a big mistake to assume that China will be satisfied with a small arsenal. As China becomes a true great power and adopts a broader set of global interests, and as U.S. military preparations—conventional and nuclear—focus increasingly on China, leaders in Beijing will likely grow more and more uncomfortable living in the shadow of American nuclear primacy.

If U.S.-China relations are headed for trouble, the United States faces difficult questions now about its nuclear-force posture and grand strategy. It may seem too late to debate the merits of pursuing nuclear primacy, but important decisions about it remain. The United States is reducing its nuclear arsenal to comply with arms-control treaties. By simply retiring its least-effective systems, Washington can make those reductions without affecting its nuclear primacy—and will most likely do this.

But the United States could decide instead to retire its most lethal submarine-based warheads, its highly accurate

to adopt highly limited war aims—a reversal of the Powell Doctrine of committing overwhelming force to win decisively? Does the military need to rethink the American way of war, focused as it is on blinding and confusing the enemy? And how does the United States plan to manage an alliance system that may become strained, as its allies increasingly realize that they're more vulnerable than the United States to nuclear threats and coercion? This asymmetry of risks conjures memories of the Cold War and of the challenges that such problems posed for the NATO alliance; the rise of China will make the U.S. and its allies confront these painful issues again.

The fundamental conundrum for the United States is this: Its current drive toward nuclear primacy is both a solution—and the problem itself. Nuclear primacy is supposed to give the United States a trump card in future disputes, allowing it to reassure allies and coerce potential enemies. But it may also trigger an arms race and raise new risks that neither America's enemies—nor its allies—will find easy to bear. ■

Keir A. Lieber is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Notre Dame and the author of *War and the Engineers: The Primacy of Politics Over Technology* (2005). Daryl G. Press has worked as a consultant on military analysis projects for the U.S. Department of Defense for 13 years, and he is an associate professor of government at Dartmouth College.



THE **Atlantic**

FICTION ISSUE 2007

WRITING BY ANN PATCHETT,
JOHN UPDIKE, AND TOBIAS WOLFF

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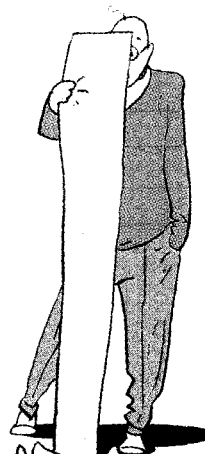
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► **CAO FEI** (born 1978) is one of several innovative young artists to come out of the Pearl River Delta, one of China's economic and manufacturing powerhouses. Her photographs, videos, installations, and theater productions reflect the region's manic development and its youth culture, heavily influenced by Japanese manga and "cosplay" (dressing up as anime and manga characters). For her *What Are You Doing Here?* (2006), which compares the dreams of migrant workers at a lightbulb factory with the reality of their lives, the artist encouraged performances and installations by the workers in the factory space. She is one of four artists featured in the China pavilion at this year's Venice Biennale.



MY FUTURE IS NOT A DREAM 02
2006
DIGITAL C-PRINT, 47 X 59 IN

A Cultural Revolution

BY BRITTA ERICKSON

ZHANG XIAOGANG, COURTESY OF THE ESTELA COLLECTION, NEW YORK, NY; LIU XIAODONG, COURTESY OF XIN BEIJING ART GALLERY, BEIJING, CHINA; AI WEIWEI, COURTESY OF CHAMBERS FINE ART, NEW YORK, NY; YANG FUDONG, COURTESY OF SHANGHART GALLERY, SHANGHAI, CHINA; CAO FEI, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND LOMBARD-FREID PROJECTS, NEW YORK, NY; HONG HAO, COURTESY OF CHAMBERS FINE ART, NEW YORK, NY; LIN TIANMAO AND WANG GONGXIN, COURTESY OF FRIEDMAN BENDA, NEW YORK, NY; SHI GUORUI, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, BEIJING, CHINA; XU BING, COURTESY OF XU BING STUDIO, BROOKLYN, NY; YANG JIECHANG, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, PARIS, FRANCE & HEIDELBERG, GERMANY

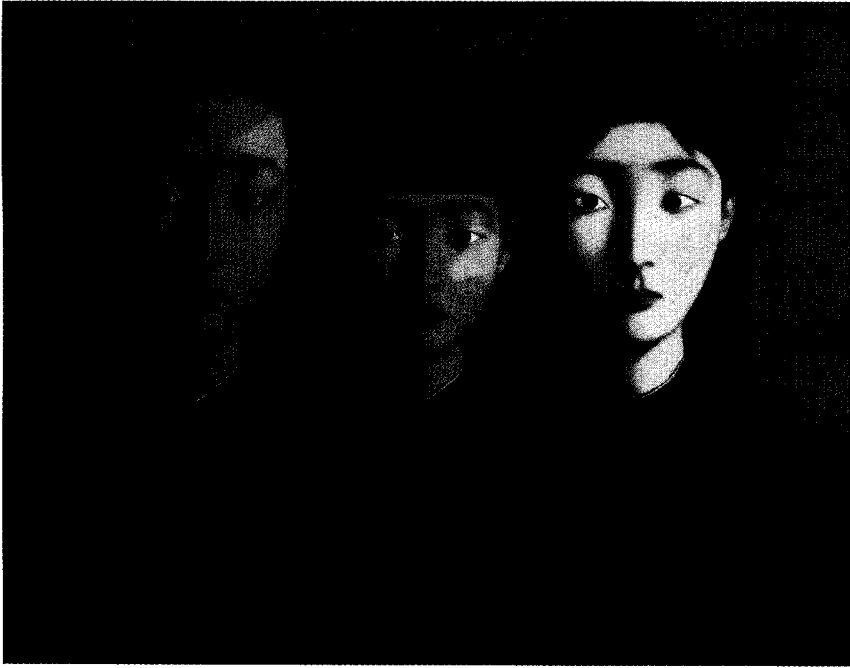
MORE ON THEATLANTIC.COM
For an author-narrated slideshow about contemporary Chinese art, visit www.theatlantic.com/erickson.

Contemporary Chinese art is attracting widespread international interest, thanks to the extraordinary prices being paid at auction. Last November, in Hong Kong, Zhang Xiaogang's *Tiananmen Square* (1993) sold for \$2.3 million, and Liu Xiaodong's *Three Gorges: Newly Displaced Population* (2004) sold for more than \$2.7 million.

The headline-grabbing sales have been dominated by a handful of Beijing-based painters whose works have a signature look easily recognizable as Chinese. Museums worldwide, though, are beginning to take a much broader interest in the Chinese art scene, exhibiting artists working in a variety of

media, from ink painting and sculpture to installations and performance art. Major solo exhibitions—such as those of Huang Yong Ping at Minnesota's Walker Art Center, Cai Guo-Qiang at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, Zhou Tiehai at Tokyo's Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, and Yang Fudong at the Kunsthalle Vienna—show an increasing appreciation of the breadth of the work being created in China and provide evidence of the rapid integration of Chinese artists into the international art arena. ▀

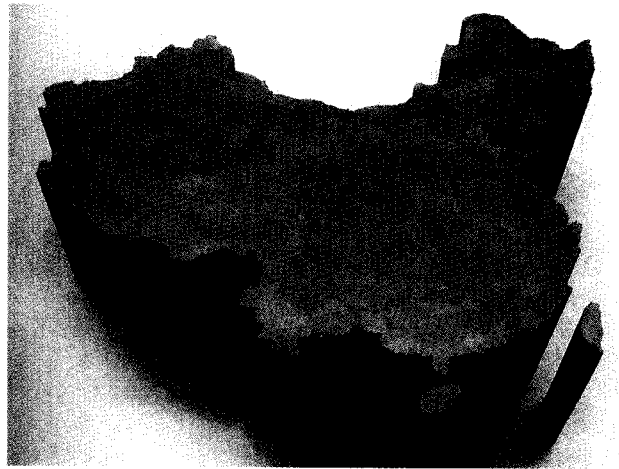
Britta Erickson is an independent scholar and curator who focuses on contemporary Chinese art. She has taught at Stanford University and has curated major exhibitions at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, in Washington, D.C., and at Stanford's Cantor Arts Center.



◀ **ZHANG XIAOGANG** (born 1958) is one of the world's most financially successful artists. A figurative oil painter, he is one of four artists (along with Fang Lijun, Yue Minjun, and Wang Guangyi) whose work has dominated the recent auction boom. Half of the top 10 lots in Sotheby's March 21 sale of contemporary Asian art were by Zhang, and four of those five works came from his *Bloodlines* series, among the most recognizable works of recent Chinese art. Begun in the early 1990s, *Bloodlines* features smoothly rendered portraits of "families" (generally two parents, one child) or "comrades," with the poignantly dispassionate look of the sitters in old photographs. Recently Zhang has begun experimenting with photography.

BLOODLINES: MY BIG FAMILY
1994
OIL ON CANVAS, 69 X 89 IN

▶ **AI WEIWEI** (born 1957) is one of China's most influential cultural figures. He first made his name in the late 1970s with his participation in the dissident "Stars" artists group. After more than a decade in New York, he returned to China in the early 1990s and devoted himself to curatorial projects and publications that nurtured the country's nascent conceptual-art scene. Today he spends most of his time on architecture and urban development, and he is a consultant for Herzog & de Meuron's Beijing Olympic Stadium. Ever intent on answering the question "What is Art?," Ai ranges artistically from exquisitely reworked—or destroyed—antiquities to such vast projects as *Fairytale* (2007), for which he is transporting 1,001 Chinese citizens to Kassel, Germany, to explore themes of identity and place. *Map of China* is one of a series of sculptures he has made from Qing Dynasty wood rescued from demolished temples.



MAP OF CHINA
2004
TIELE WOOD FROM DESTROYED QING DYNASTY TEMPLES, 20 X 79 X 63 IN



◀ **LIU XIAODONG** (born 1963) is China's top realist figure painter, widely celebrated for his ability to capture nuances of mood. He was associated both with the "New Generation" figurative realists, who broke away from their academic socialist-realist training, and with the "Cynical Realists," who turned a sardonic eye on society in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Liu paints ordinary people, presenting them sympathetically and with an eye for the absurdity of everyday existence. In protest against the speculators buying up his works, Liu painted directly on the gallery walls for his 2006 "Domino" exhibition, only to whitewash them at the show's close.

DOMINO
2006
INSTALLATION AT XIN BEIJING ART GALLERY



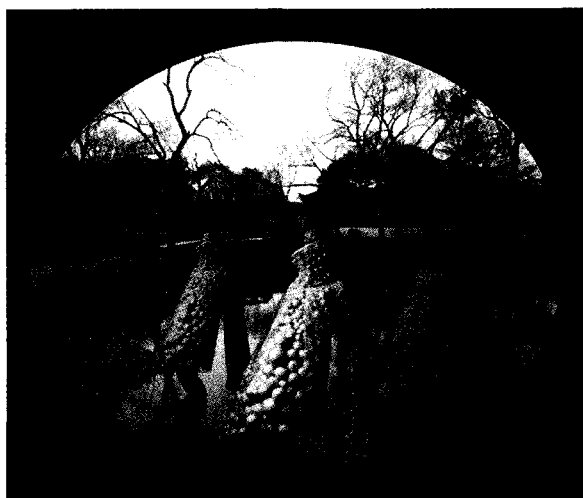
◀ **YANG FUDONG** (born 1971) is a leading light of the Shanghai art scene, noted as both a filmmaker and a photographer. His photographs depict a youthful elite adrift in a contemporary urban environment, while his films more often portray a mythic historical time reminiscent of early-20th-century Shanghai. The films hint at plot development but offer no coherent narrative, and the combination conjures a dreamlike world. Yang's masterful use of color, lighting, and composition owes a debt to his education as a painter at the China Academy of Fine Arts, in Hangzhou.

NO SNOW ON THE BROKEN BRIDGE
EIGHT-CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION
2006



▲ **HONG HAO** (born 1965) first became known with his early serigraph series *Selected Scriptures* (1992–2000), consisting of images of the pages of an open book whose witty content ranges from altered world maps to pop visual commentary on Chinese cultural history. Some of his recent photographs have been dense compositions depicting ordinary objects, reflecting a fascination with *trompe l'oeil*; others have satirized the foibles of the art world. For his take on the time-honored *Elegant Gathering*, Hong digitally inserted contemporary figures photographed at exhibition openings into historical renderings.

ELEGANT GATHERING AT
WESTERN GARDEN ON MT. HUA
2007
HAND-PAINTED DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH
31 X 110 IN



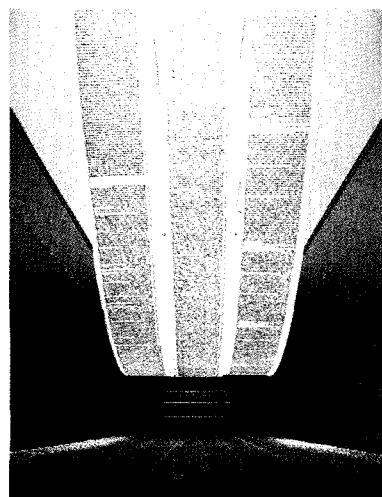
HERE? OR THERE?
NO. 1
2003
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH
EDITION OF 10
45 X 55 IN

◀ **LIN TIANMIAO** (born 1961), like Ai Weiwei, lived in New York for many years. After she returned to Beijing in 1995, she and her husband, the video artist Wang Gongxin, exhibited mixed-media installations in their home at a time when the public display of such work was not sanctioned. Over the next decade, she refined her technique with her signature material—laboriously worked natural and man-made threads—reaching a high point with the series of phantasmagorical costumes she created for the video and mixed-media installation *Here? Or There?*, co-produced with Wang and featuring otherworldly figures moving through diverse landscapes.



A VIEW OF
SAN FRANCISCO
FROM ALCATRAZ ISLAND
2006
UNIQUE CAMERA OBSCURA
GELATIN SILVER PRINT,
56 X 145 IN

▲ **SHI GUORUI** (born 1964) shoots large-scale photographs with a camera obscura. In 2002, he transformed one of the Great Wall's watchtowers into a pinhole camera and photographed the wall and surrounding landscape. In 2004, he shot Shanghai's waterfront from a luxury hotel room made into a camera. Recently he has turned his attention to the American landscape, producing images of California for his current solo exhibition at the de Young Museum, in San Francisco. For the image shown here, he gained permission to photograph San Francisco from the chapel of the now-closed prison on Alcatraz Island.



◀ **XU BING** (born 1955) took the Beijing art scene by storm with his *Book From the Sky* (1987–1991), an installation of books and scrolls printed with invented characters—also pictured on pages 6–7. Critics now recognize it as one of the most important works of 20th-century Chinese art. Xu left China in the wake of the Tiananmen Square massacre and has had tremendous international success.

BOOK FROM THE SKY
1987–1991
HAND-PRINTED BOOKS, CEILING AND WALL SCROLLS
FROM FALSE LETTER BLOCKS. INSTALLATION VIEW AT
THE ELVEHJEM MUSEUM OF ART, MADISON, WI, 1991



CRYING LANDSCAPE—PENTAGON
2003

ONE OF A SERIES OF SIX PAINTINGS
WITH SOUND INSTALLATION
INK AND MINERAL COLORS ON PAPER, EACH 118 X 197 IN

▲ **YANG JIECHANG** (born 1956) was trained in the traditional Chinese arts, studying calligraphy with a master and living in a Taoist monastery, in addition to receiving an academic art education. Based in Europe since 1988, he works fluidly in a wide variety of media, using traditional techniques in innovative ways. His paintings cast a skeptical eye on both East and West and address politically and socially charged subjects such as the Tiananmen Square massacre and the 9/11 attacks. With *Crying Landscape—Pentagon* (2003), Yang used the meticulous “fine line” Chinese painting technique—traditionally employed to render birds and flowers—to depict one of the most shocking events in recent memory.

Harlan Coben's work ethic, gift for plot twists, obsession with sales numbers, and careful brand management have made him a blockbuster novelist who earns millions of dollars per book. What it takes to succeed as a thriller writer—even when the literary establishment doesn't acknowledge your existence

BY ERIC KONIGSBERG

Illustration by Richard Thompson

Paperback Writer

Until I met Harlan Coben, I was only vaguely familiar with his name. It was one of dozens I would see on the short paperbacks that line the shelves of airport news shops. I had an even fuzzier recollection that when Bill Clinton was recovering from quadruple-bypass surgery, in 2004, he was photographed holding a copy of Coben's novel *No Second Chance*. ¶ My introduction to Coben occurred in October 2005, when he and I were among some 150 authors »



featured at a book fair in New York's Bryant Park. I was a last-minute addition to the schedule—my publisher was able to get me a slot because another writer canceled—and was thrilled that despite my book's small print run, about 30 people attended my reading. After I finished, however, I realized that most of them were not there for me but had come early to secure themselves seats to hear Coben, the next writer on the bill.

Later, the two of us were assigned to share a table where we could autograph our books. The queue for Coben stretched 40 people down the concrete footpath and never seemed to let up. Men and women asked him to pose with them for photos. They presented him with stacks of his novels to sign. As for me, I signed something like eight or nine copies of my book (and that's including one for my in-laws and multiple copies for my wife's friend). The contrast was dispiriting.

There was no point in pretending I had something else to do, so I watched Coben work. He's 6 foot 4 and imposingly built (he played power forward for the Amherst

publisher, told me. "He is that rare best-selling author who's still on the rise."

As I sat disconsolately alongside Coben at the book fair, I might have derived some comfort in resenting him for his fan club, except that—big surprise—he also turned out to be an absolute mensch: When he noticed how few people were approaching the table for me, he leaned in to offer an unpatronizing pep talk in the form of a story about the time he gave a reading in front of only two people for his first book. "And they weren't even there for me—they were there to see the other writer I was reading with," he said. Afterward, he'd attempted to commiserate with his fellow author, but the man wouldn't have any of it. "He said to me, 'Are you kidding? This is the happiest day of my life. I get to write books for a living—I'm living my dream.'"

Coben gave me some pointers for the book-promotion circuit. "Nothing's more boring than listening to somebody read, so I just do shtick and talk about how I write," he said. Also: "If you're signing a book to somebody and they ask you to date it, tell them, 'I don't date—my wife

Coben sells about 2.7 million books each year. Yet he is poignantly aware that the stuff he writes doesn't register with those in the business of treating books as literature.

College basketball team), almost completely bald, and charismatic in a self-effacing, deracinated-son-of-the-Borscht-Belt manner. When a reader asked how long it takes him to write a book, he said it's always nine months. "I compare it to childbirth," he said. "The best part is the idea—wink-wink."

Over the last 17 years, Coben, who is 45, has published 16 crime novels, the most recent seven of which have made *The New York Times's* best-seller list. The first hardcover print run of *The Woods*, which came out in April, was for 258,000 copies in the United States alone, and the book went into a second printing even before it debuted at No. 2 on the *Times* list. All but his first two books are still in print, and his backlist sells about 1 million paperbacks in the United States each year. Including his worldwide figures, he sells about 2.7 million books a year.

His novels have been translated into 37 languages, including Thai, Hebrew, and Arabic. In France, his books sell as many as 400,000 copies each, and a French studio recently made *Tell No One*, his breakout book, into a movie (*Ne Le Dis à Personne*). That book came out in the third week of April 2001, and every year since, Coben's publisher has staked out that same week to introduce a new Coben work. "The best thing about his sales record is each of those books has outsold the previous one," Brian Tart, the president of Dutton Books, Coben's current

won't let me.' That goes over well." When the signing hour was over, we bought copies of each other's books (this was my idea). He inscribed his: "To Eric, Good Luck! Enjoy it, dude—It's a dream come true!"

Yet for all his success and self-confidence, Coben is poignantly aware that the stuff he writes doesn't register with those in the business of treating books as literature; to them, he might as well not exist. One doesn't exactly expect to see a mass-market writer like Coben on the advisory board of *The Paris Review*, but I was surprised when he told me ruefully that he'd never been reviewed in the Sunday *New York Times Book Review*—not even a capsule review by the crime-fiction columnist Marilyn Stasio. (He does, however, have a fan in Janet Maslin, a weekday book critic at the paper who considers Coben one of the thriller genre's better writers and has reviewed four of his books to date, raving about two of them.)

His ambivalence about his status—which sometimes surfaces as proud, oblivious populism but also suggests something like envy—seems to work in his favor: It probably does much to fuel his productivity. When we passed a tent where Frank McCourt, whose first book, *Angela's Ashes*, had won a Pulitzer in 1997, was reading from his new book, *Teacher Man*, Coben took note of the crowd—much bigger than the gathering he'd attracted—and shrugged.



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"How long do you think it's been since Frank McCourt published his last book—five years? Six?" he joked. "What the hell does that guy do all day?"

When I finally picked up the novel Coben had signed for me, it really was a struggle to put it down. My wife and I were in India on vacation, and I read *The Innocent* for four hours on a bus in the evening, holding the book closer and closer to my face as the sun went down. When jet lag had me stirring at 3:30 a.m., I ran down to the hotel lobby and finished the book before breakfast.

The plot concerned Matt Hunter, a young, happily married paralegal who received a video on his cell phone of his wife, in a wig, in a hotel room with a strange man. (And she said she was going out of town on business!) The story's myriad elements—strippers, gangsters, FBI agents, a homicide case involving a dead nun (whose breast implants cleverly raised a whole bunch of questions with answers that proved to be intricately connected to Matt's central dilemma)—seemed divergent until the last 30 or so pages, when Coben introduced a bunch of other unexpected and multidirectional turns to resolve the many strands with engineer-like control.

Matt had a skeleton in his closet: When he was a student at Bowdoin, he'd gotten dragged into a fight with a bunch of drunk UMass students and accidentally (he's

pretty sure it was an accident) killed one of them. He'd since put his life back together, after four years of hard time, and this personal history provided emotional ballast to the complicated yarn that followed. Was he really innocent? Would his old transgression be forever catching up to him in ways that weren't fair? Does everybody have a dark secret stowed away somewhere?

Coben didn't dwell on these questions too much, and when he did, it amounted to tin-eared philosophizing. He didn't make me feel for the characters, who didn't offer a lot in the way of interiority. Most of what they revealed about themselves came by way of dialogue, which was snappy enough (it wouldn't pass the read-aloud test, but on the page it's functional). Yet I was thoroughly engrossed. The narration—which turned on a long series of switchbacks and kept moving and shifting, moving and shifting, alternating points of view with each short chapter—had a hypnotic effect.

"I set the reader up and then I start twisting," Coben explained later. (He sometimes uses the verb *twist* without an object, as in, "I might've twisted too much in *Just One Look*.")

When I got home from vacation, I plowed through another of his books, and then another. Even though I'd never been a big reader of mysteries or thrillers, with Coben I had to know how each book was going to end, and I relished getting there. It made reading feel kind of like watching a movie, or even a basketball game when one is deeply invested in the outcome. There was action every minute, and so much momentum carrying the story forward that until I finished it, I was in a sort of twitchy agony if I got stuck doing anything else.

Of the 50 books that Nielsen BookScan, a sales-tracking service, identified as the biggest sellers of 2006, 15 were thriller, crime, or horror novels. *The Da Vinci Code*, by Dan Brown, is one of the biggest-selling novels of all time, with 75 million copies in print. James Patterson has written 14 consecutive No. 1 best sellers since 2003, and has sold 130 million books worldwide. Mary Higgins Clark has published 25 best sellers since 1975, and has sold 80 million books in the United States alone.

Coben is among the generation of writers who have come to prominence in the last five or 10 years and can be counted on to debut in the top half of the *Times* list. Others include Janet Evanovich, Michael Connelly, Daniel Silva, David Baldacci, Vince Flynn, Dennis Lehane, Tess Gerritsen, Brad Meltzer, and Lee Child. When a house issues a new book by any of the above, it expects—with optimism, in some cases—to sell more than 300,000 copies in hardcover and 1 million or so in paperback. (To put this in some perspective, even the biggest successes in so-called literary fiction barely enter this realm.

MADURAI

From our terrace at the Taj Garden Retreat,
the city below belies its snarl of commerce—
men pushing postcards on the teeming street,
and doe-eyed children begging with their words
so soft the language can't be understood
even were we to try and were not fleeing
the nudge of stirred pity. Can life be good,
awakening us to hunger? What point has being?

Vishnu, sleeping, hatched the cosmic lotus
from his navel. The god-filled polychrome
great temple towers—glaring, mountainous—
assume from here a distant ghostly tone,
smoke shadows in the sleeping cityscape
that dreams a universe devoid of shape.

—JOHN UPDIKE

John Updike's recent books include *Terrorist*, a novel, and *Still Looking: Essays on American Art*. His latest collection of poems is *Americana* (2001).

It's taken seven years and a Pulitzer Prize for Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* to sell around 800,000 copies—probably less than 90,000 in hardcover—in the United States, extrapolating from BookScan's figures. Even buoyed by widespread critical acclaim and a special movie-tie-in edition, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* may not have sold half a million copies after five years in print.)

The authors who reach Coben's level tend to do so on the strength of a single trademarkable characteristic. "If you want to break somebody out, you need to package them in a way that lets everybody know they do one thing and it's different than anybody else," says Phyllis Grann of Doubleday, who is responsible for making Tom Clancy and Patricia Cornwell household names, and who, as the president and CEO of Penguin-Putnam, oversaw Dutton's signing of Coben (Dutton is an imprint of Penguin-Putnam). "It's very much a matter of branding an author."

Clancy broke out by dint of his mastery of technical military detail; Scott Turow brought a new level of legal nuance to the courtroom thriller; Robert Ludlum's plots presented readers with more nesting dolls than they'd ever before encountered in a single volume; and James Lee Burke's growing popularity may be the result of his crime-solving protagonist's bouts with depression (and membership in AA). Patterson combines classic mystery traits with police-procedural elements and serial-killer villains for a hybrid effect, and the young-adult-book quality of his prose—chapters tend to be three pages long—along with his tremendous output have made him the most strongly branded author around.

Though Coben's protagonists are male, they're husbands and fathers, and the crimes they're unwittingly called upon to solve involve not so much intrigue as middle-class desperation. In *Promise Me*, for instance, a murder and a kidnapping hinge on a man's desire to secure his son's admission to Dartmouth. "Harlan writes about families in jeopardy," Grann says, "and Dutton's success in branding him has to do with the fact that there aren't many people doing that as well as he does." In this, Coben has staked out territory similar to Mary Higgins Clark's.

Coben's career can be divided into two distinct phases: the early period (1995 to 2000), when he wrote a series of mysteries, and the years since, during which he's written seven books, typically classified as thrillers. (The crime-fiction category can be divided into several subgenres, but for many in the book business the primary distinction is between mysteries and thrillers. Few give the same answer when asked to pinpoint the difference, but the most common response is that in a mystery, the plot is dominated by the uncovering or solving of a crime; in a thriller, the crime itself is what drives the action.) People

tend to focus on the formal difference between Coben's mystery and thriller periods: His mysteries share the same private eye, Coben's alter ego, Myron Bolitar; his thrillers—with the exception of *Promise Me*, in which Myron returns—have all been stand-alones involving whipsawed, regular-guy protagonists who only happen to be uncovering a crime as a way of saving their own lives, or protecting a loved one. But the more significant difference between the two groups of books has to do with emotional territory. It wasn't until his first thriller, *Tell No One*, that Coben hit upon the thematic touchstone of the domestic space imperiled.

The books from Coben's early period are essentially violent comedies. Myron Bolitar has an intriguing profile for a PI: He's a sports agent (and former college-basketball star) who just happens to solve crimes on the side and, for some reason, still lives with his parents. The intended audience for these books is the same audience that likes, say, *SportsCenter* and Dave Barry columns, and can recite dialogue from *Fletch* movies, or for that matter anything with Chevy Chase. By contrast, Coben's later books are all set in suburban New Jersey and read as if they're aimed at viewers of the Lifetime Network. Coben estimates that his readership today skews slightly more female than male.

Lisa Erbach Vance, Coben's agent at the Aaron Priest Literary Agency, describes her client's shift from mystery to thriller as an attempt to broaden his appeal. "We had talked about taking away some of the funny-just-for-funny things, certain things that can just earmark a book as belonging to a category," she says. "Myron is that wise-cracking sports agent. That's who you know him as. But writing a stand-alone means writing a quote-unquote 'bigger' book. There are certain people who will read thrillers but won't read mysteries."

When Vance began reading the manuscript of *Tell No One*, in 2000, she sensed immediately that it would reach a larger audience. "It had a universal quality," she told me. "It was a story about a husband who believed his wife had been murdered, and he's still haunted by her—he's never been able to move on, and he'll put his life at risk on this slim, crazy hope when he gets an e-mail that makes him think she could still be alive," she said. "That Myron tone didn't lend itself to this. All Harlan's books—his later books—they're about husbands and wives, parents and children, a family member hiding a secret, what you don't know about those closest to you."

Coben says that ginning up the idea for a novel constitutes the heavy lifting. "The actual writing time is a lot shorter than the thinking time," he told me. "I don't do too many notes. I keep it mostly in my head. I usually start writing a new book around January, and it's due October 1."

He spends the first three months on his couch, searching for an idea—"looking for that Homer Simpson, 'Woo-hoo!' moment"—and always breaks for a month or two come April, when he has to travel to promote the book he wrote the previous year. After he writes the first few pages, he e-mails them to Dutton's offices, where they're read by his editor (of late, Ben Sevier); the chief publicist, Lisa Johnson; and Brian Tart, the president of the house.

Coben says his main objective when he's on the couch is to come up with the criminal event that will frame a book. "I settle on the crime ahead of time, but the other character stuff—will Myron and Win [his sidekick] stay friends, for example—I'll decide what happens as I go along. I'll usually have an idea by the time I'm started for an early twist, but the rest of the twists come as I'm writing."

He keeps a notebook on the couch with him, yet one wonders how many hours a day are actually spent in contemplation, as it's difficult to imagine him devoting significant time to any activity that doesn't yield immediate and tangible results. Everything about Coben's work habits—he writes with his BlackBerry turned on, he writes in coffee shops and the local library—suggests that he makes his writing time fit the rest of his life, rather than the other way around. (He says that he and his wife, Anne, a pediatrician at Columbia Presbyterian's children's hospital, share parenting duties—they have four young children—"pretty much 50-50.") "Guilt is the thing that really drives me," he says. "Every day that I'm not writing I hear a mother's voice in my head: 'Why aren't you writing that book?' People ask what my hobbies are. I don't have hobbies. I don't, because when I'm doing anything else, I feel like I'm supposed to be writing."

Nevertheless, he manages to fall behind his schedule every year, and he makes up for lost time by cranking out most of a book in a matter of weeks. "This year I think I'm more behind than I've ever been," he told me in May of last year. At the time, he had written about 60 pages of *The Woods*, which had an October deadline. "But the fact is, if the book is 400 pages long, I'm rarely past page 250 with one month left. At the end I'll write as many as 150 pages in a week, as many as 50 in a day. I'll break to take the kids to school or whatever, and that last day might be more or less a 96-hour day with a bunch of all-nighters. Everybody in the house kind of picks up on it. My wife knows it's that day or two out of the year. Basically, there's no stopping me."

From there, the manuscript goes nearly straight to press. "I don't really need much editing," he says. Mitch Hoffman, Coben's editor at Dutton until this year, told me: "My job was to reflect back to Harlan the experience I was having at each moment. He knows what he wants readers to be experiencing at various points along the way—in terms of character, story, pacing, and emotional punch. So I would be sort of his test audience."

The roots of Coben's work ethic seem to lie not in perfectionism, or in a relationship with an inner muse, but in his determination to rise to the top of the heap. "When I was just starting out, I hated signing in local malls, because no one was there," he says. "It made me write so hard. I didn't want to be there anymore. The same thing at Bouchercon—a convention for crime novelists, their publishers, and their fans. 'All the writers there were so bitter. I didn't like being in that boat. I would just go home and write'—he curled his fists and appeared to press down, almost as though he had an imaginary jackhammer in front of him—"so much harder and harder."

Coben has been writing books all of his adult life, though for most of his 20s he spent his business hours running his grandfather's travel agency, which specialized in group tours. Growing up, it didn't occur to him that books—reading or writing them—were his great love. "It's not like you could look back and say about me, 'He always had his nose in a book as a kid,'" he says. He does, however, recall the exhilaration of plowing through William Goldman's *Marathon Man* as a formative moment. "That was my first experience with a book where I just had to keep turning the page and turning the page."

When I asked Coben to name his biggest literary influences, he said, "I'm not a student of the crime-fiction genre. Myron's early stuff is definitely a descendant of Raymond Chandler and Robert B. Parker. I read Parker's Spenser series in college. When it comes to detective novels, 90 percent of us admit he's an influence, and the rest of us lie about it. My favorite writer is Philip Roth. I like Tom Perrotta," the author of *Election* and *Little Children*.

Coben's father was a lawyer, and his family lived in Livingston, New Jersey, a town that often features in his books. "We weren't that well off; we were the poor Jews in Livingston," he says. He majored in political science at Amherst, where he also met his wife. Both were four-year letter earners in basketball (she's 5 foot 10).

During his freshman year, he happened to share a corridor with two other future novelists, David Foster Wallace and Mark Costello (whose book *Big If* was a finalist for the 2002 National Book Award). "David Foster Wallace was in an introduction-to-poli-sci class I took my freshman year, and I remember the first paper of the term," Coben recalls. "I thought I'd done pretty well, but I got a B-minus on it; David got an A-plus. So I asked him, 'Could I take a look at yours, you know, to see what you did that I didn't?' He said sure. And when I read it, it was like the most brilliant thing I'd ever read. I thought, 'Uh-oh,' because I just assumed everybody else at Amherst was as smart as he was."

The summer before Coben's senior year, his grandfather had hired him to lead a group of adults on a trip to

Spain, and that fall he began writing a humorous novel based on the experience. He finished the book after he graduated, and when it failed to find a publisher, he started another.

Coben wrote in the early morning and sometimes at night. "I never bought the excuse of not having time to write," he says. "If you really want to do it, you're either going to find those hours or eventually decide not to be a writer." He saved money by living in his parents' basement from 1984 to 1988 (which might explain why Myron Bolitar lives with his parents through six novels), then bought a condominium and got married before he finally sold his first book, a sports mystery titled *Play Dead*. Though he hadn't found an agent, he sent his manuscript to a college acquaintance, who was working as an editor at British-American Publishing, a small imprint owned by Simon & Schuster. The house paid Coben an advance of

out, it was clear Bantam had gotten two bargains. *Tell No One* landed on the *Times* best-seller list for two weeks—Coben credits this partly to an aggressive newspaper ad campaign and partly to Book Sense, the consortium of independent bookstores, which recommended it in its monthly newsletter—and *Gone for Good* was on the list for four weeks. "But with *No Second Chance*"—the next book—"I really signed for serious money," he said.

The advances since then have all been solidly in seven figures, Coben says, "and if you add up all the foreign rights, those maybe equal the American money." A publishing executive who has been involved in the sale of some of Coben's books estimates that Coben earns at least \$3 million to \$4 million per book, when foreign rights are factored in. Though there are a handful of fiction writers who make more, it's a staggering amount of money for a novelist. Coben lives with his wife and family in an

Coben's novels have made him rich, but that's not what's important to him. It's sales qua sales—his statistical record—that motivates Coben, rather than the money his sales bring in.

\$2,000, then gave him a few hundred dollars more than that for his already-written second novel, a mystery called *Miracle Cure*.

"I never thought I wasn't going to earn a living as a writer," Coben says. "I figured at some point I'd get a break. Every book I wrote, I got better."

Neither of his first two books reached a large audience—the print run of each was fewer than 4,000 copies—but his advances and sales on the Bolitar books, which followed, gradually grew. He got a two-book advance of \$10,000 for *Deal Breaker* (print run: 15,000) and a second Bolitar novel. He worked with, then left, two agents while writing the first four Bolitar books, which had been published as bargain-priced paperback originals; but he shopped around the idea for the fifth, *One False Move*, and landed with his current agent, Vance.

"A little fan base was already building by then," Vance says. "When you're published in original mass market"—those airport-shop-sized paperbacks—"your chances of getting reviewed are slim. But he was always very good at putting himself out there. In the publishing community, editors knew who he was. He'd go to award things and writers' events. Sometimes I think that personal connection really makes a difference."

Coben was supposed to deliver his eighth Bolitar novel to Bantam, but then he came up with the idea for *Tell No One*, his first stand-alone thriller. Bantam offered \$175,000 to keep him from going elsewhere, and \$275,000 for whatever he wrote next. By the time *Tell No One* came

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"Writing my first book," he told me, "I think in hindsight I went into it saying, 'It's gonna sell.' I was earning enough to scrape by sometime around a book or two before *Tell No One*. I moved up from \$50,000 to \$75,000, then \$150,000 for each book. I had never thought I would be doing anything else. I had enough encouragement. I'm very proud that nobody gave me a leg up. It wasn't like my dad knew somebody. It was all a wonderful struggle, in hindsight. I knew my books were better than what they were selling."

To travel with Coben on a book tour is to see just how foreign his orbit is from the typical novelist's. The distinctions aren't just matters of scale, though there's that too—what with a 16-city tour of engagements for *Promise Me* (with signings at branches of Costco, Sam's Club, and BJ's Wholesale Club) and day-long press junkets in England and France (with one newspaper reporter after another shuttling into a hotel suite for 45 minutes of interview time with the author). The differences have more to do with how much effort goes into managing

Coben's commercial results, how much scorekeeping he himself participates in, and, in a more general sense, how involved he is in the maintaining of his brand.

I met up with him in Scottsdale, Arizona, on the first Monday in May of last year, when *Promise Me* had been out for six days. To Coben, the precise date was important, because it meant that the book was still in its first week since publication. He had an hour or so to kill before his speaking engagement, so he dropped by a Bookstar branch (owned by Barnes & Noble) to sign its stock. As soon as he walked in, he rolled back his head wearily. "Here we go," he said, clearly annoyed but trying to be good-natured.

What was the matter? Coben had noticed immediately that none of the tall, open-tiered display shelves in the front of the store—known in the retail business as "stepladders"—were stocked with *Promise Me*. Instead, they were lined with copies of James Patterson's *Beach Road*; Coben's new book sat in neat stacks on the adjacent tables. Both display spaces—the stepladders and the tables—are prime real estate, and publishers pay Borders and Barnes & Noble anywhere from \$20,000 to \$40,000, depending on the length of time and time of year, to have a book there (the arrangement is known as "co-op placement"). Still, a greater order of books from the store is required to get a stepladder—and Coben said that *Promise Me* was supposed to be occupying one right here.

"Dutton got me the stepladders for one week, and then I'm on tables for another month," he said. "The week is Tuesday to Tuesday. Technically, they're not supposed to be taking me down from the stepladder until they open for business on Tuesday."

He repeated this to a store clerk, who said the branch would be restocking that night. Soon another clerk appeared with a hand truck stacked with copies of *Promise Me* for him to sign. That didn't do much to appease Coben, who reasoned that if the store was restocking, it must have run low on the book early—which meant an error of anticipation on the part of the supplying agency.

Another clerk, evidently thrilled to see Coben, showed him a copy of Barnes & Noble's in-house best-seller list. For the week that had ended the day before, *Promise Me* was No. 1. Over the coming week, in fact, the book would debut at the top of a slew of best-seller lists—Borders, BookScan, *Publishers Weekly*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*—all of which compile data in slightly different ways. About the only list Coben hadn't topped was that of *The New York Times*, which had *Promise Me* as No. 2, behind Mary Higgins Clark's *Two Little Girls in Blue*.

Although it was his highest charting yet in *The Times*, Coben was disappointed, because it meant he'd have to wait another year—and write another book—for a chance to hit No. 1. But why, I asked, didn't he think *Promise Me* could rise a slot in the coming week? "James Patterson

has a new book out," he said, referring to the book that had displaced his on the stepladder. "This was my week." (In April of this year, *The Woods* also debuted at No. 2, behind *The Children of Húrin*, the posthumously reconstructed "last" novel of J. R. R. Tolkien. "We weren't even aware we were coming out when the Tolkien book was," Lisa Johnson, Coben's publicist, told me. "That's a tough one to beat—but we can still say Harlan sold the most of any living fiction author last week.")

Coben was less concerned about losing out on sales—he knows he's receiving his fair share of those—than he was about losing out on the *recording* of sales. The next day, he walked into a Sam's Club in Las Vegas to sign books, and immediately noticed that the fine print on the price stickers affixed to *Promise Me* said "Harlan, Coben."

"It probably means the books are SKU'd wrong," Coben said, referring to the Stock Keeping Unit identifier tag and imagining the potential for a tabulation crisis. "Suppose it shows up as Sam Club's chain sells zero of mine nationwide, because the book's registered under somebody named 'Coben Harlan.' The computer doesn't know the difference. That zero gets reported to the best-seller lists, and then I'm dead meat." He got on his BlackBerry to report the problem to his publisher.

There is something to Harlan Coben's demeanor that leads a person to observe that he isn't merely comfortable with his success but actually endowed with it. He approaches being a novelist the way a businessman or a lawyer—or for that matter an athlete—approaches his craft: as a series of finite and solvable problems. Success is very much a destination, in other words, rather than a journey. Coben often brings up his high-achiever friends, but he doesn't seem to be dropping names (they're not famous like Madonna-famous) so much as pointing out that having friends—like professional basketball and baseball players, and the rock-guitar hero Nils Lofgren—who kick a lot of ass, like he does, is simply a significant component of his life.

He met most of these friends because they were fans of his books. One of them is Bryant Gumbel, who had him on *The Early Show* as a guest in 2001 and whose opinion he seems to value more than any professional critic's. "Bryant sends me a long e-mail when each book comes out, telling me what was good about it and what was bad about it," Coben told me the first time we had lunch, in New York. "He and I instant-message each other once a day." (That BlackBerry again: Coben fired off a quick note to Gumbel, and when there was no immediate reply, said, "He's probably out golfing right now.")

After *Promise Me* came out, Coben got a note from Bill Clinton, who declared it Coben's best book yet. Tom Daschle, Coben says, was the first elected official to read his books. He too became a friend, and he had Coben and his family out to South Dakota for a week the summer

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before last. "I also have Republican fans," Coben was quick to point out. "I've been on Steve Forbes's yacht, the *Highlander*. He's an amazing reader. We see him a couple of times a year. In his *Forbes* magazine column, he's done a write-up on every book of mine since *Tell No One*."

Last May, at the invitation of Senator Harry Reid of Nevada—another admiring reader—Coben was hired to address the U.S. Senate's Democratic members at a retreat in Philadelphia. "I tried to be inspirational, firing them up about the good they can and should be doing," Coben told me when I was with him on his book tour. We were in Arizona, in the coffee shop of a Marriott in Scottsdale, where he was about to head out to a reading. "I asked them to do a couple of things. It took a lot of hubris. I asked them once a week to close their door and read slowly, aloud to themselves, the list of the names of the war dead," he went on. "And I said, 'Think about the boy who shoveled your walk.'"

Coben stopped talking. "Hey, there's Harry right now!" he said, pointing to the TV above the counter. Reid was on CNN. "I won't see him tomorrow in Las Vegas, because they're in session," Coben said. "He was actually bummed."

As it turned out, the friendship still served Coben well in Las Vegas. When we arrived at our hotel, the Luxor, the check-in line looked as if it would take 45 minutes. Coben e-mailed Reid's office, and it took about a minute for a secretary to call the hotel and arrange for a VIP check-in and a room upgrade.

In Las Vegas, I asked Coben how he felt about being invisible to the world represented by *The New York Times Book Review*, and about the parallel-universe status that so much crime fiction, including his books, has. At first he was *au fait* about it, but then got worked up. "If I asked you to name five great books that survived 100 years that don't have a crime in them, you couldn't," he said. "Dostoyevsky, Dickens, Oscar Wilde, Alexander Dumas, Victor Hugo."

He thought for a moment about what he'd just said. "Successful people don't need to put down mass-market books as a whole," he said at last. "Who classified these things? Those in the crime-fiction world who worry about this are failed writers. Who am I to whine about it? I get lots of e-mails from people who say I'm the only writer they read. Those readers are fine with me. I want them all. David Foster Wallace is one of the most intelligent writers in the world, and I remember him one time telling me, 'You know how to end a book. I never know how to end a book.' He's never looked down on me."

In *Promise Me*, a former girlfriend of Myron's, a writer named Jessica Culver, reappears in his life. She's about to marry another man, and Myron regrets having let her go. Crestfallen, he reads her engagement announcement

in the paper, which notes that she's been nominated for the PEN/Faulkner and the National Book Award, the sort of prizes Coben's books aren't likely to ever be in the running for.

The long-standing commercial success of genre fiction (crime and romance) has inspired debate about whether anything in the form constitutes literature—and has at times left a chip on the shoulder of those writers, like Stephen King and John Grisham, who write blockbusters that are received ambiguously (at best) by the books-as-literature crowd. In 1944, during the heyday of his hard-boiled Philip Marlowe stories, Raymond Chandler published an essay in *The Atlantic*, "The Simple Art of Murder," making his case for crime fiction in part by acknowledging that it was indeed formulaic (i.e., not "literary"). Good crime fiction, he explained, separated itself from bad crime fiction not by having an original idea or a clever conceit but by being well executed:

The average detective story is probably no worse than the average novel, but you never see the average novel. It doesn't get published. The average—or only slightly above average—detective story does ... And the strange thing is that this average, more than middling dull, pooped-out piece of utterly unreal and mechanical fiction is really not very different from what are called the masterpieces of the art. It drags on a little more slowly, the dialogue is a shade grayer, the cardboard out of which the characters are cut is a shade thinner, and the cheating is a little more obvious. But it is the same kind of book. Whereas the good novel is not at all the same kind of book as the bad novel. It is about entirely different things. But the good detective story and the bad detective story are about exactly the same things, and they are about them in very much the same way.

Last year, *The Harvard Business Review* published an analysis of the marketing of James Patterson suggesting that the sameness of an author's books actually contributes to commercial appeal. "Brands are nothing more than trust," Patterson was quoted as saying. "I trust I'm going to pick this up and I'm not going to be able to put it down. There will be tension. And pace. And some kind of human identification, not just with the heroes but also with the villains."

Some readers, of course, like variety, just as there are other readers who prefer to stick with whatever's working for them. And there are degrees of sameness: A reader who desires consistency might read only James Patterson, or he might read everything by Richard Ford, and then move on to Chang-Rae Lee, then go back to Updike's Rabbit novels, and from there to *Revolutionary Road* and *The Ice Storm*. But if branding is the goal, publishers improve

their odds by going after the readers whose tastes are the most static. There's no point in arguing against this as a business model: Given the economies of scale, branded thriller writers beat highbrow novelists in a landslide. It's book publishing as product management.

The Coben books that I've most enjoyed, *The Innocent* and *Tell No One*, are among his later works, but I think I prefer them primarily because they were two of the first that I read. It's not that I really consider them any better than his other stand-alones, or better than the Myron Bolitar novels—there's no such thing as “lesser Coben.” But with every subsequent book, I sped closer to the conclusion that each volume was the same, just with different particulars to the setup and different twists in the plot: A woman's husband is kidnapped, and both of them turn out to be hiding secrets. A reconstructive plastic surgeon's daughter is kidnapped, and figures from his past, including an old girlfriend, reenter his life. A man whose brother disappeared

do what I want,’ well, they might say, ‘We want the freedom to take back some of this money.’” (Though Coben makes clear that his publisher has never given him anything but complete freedom.) At another bookstore talk, Coben made fun of “the kind of writer who says”—here, he adopted a mooney zombie's voice—“‘I only write for myself; I don't care who reads it.’ That's like saying, ‘I only talk to myself; I don't care who's listening.’”

In Scottsdale, Coben defended his approach as a matter of antielitist ethics. “I come from a background where people worked,” he said. “The plumber doesn't wake up and say, ‘Oh, I can't do pipes today.’”

“But some writers, as I hear them talk about their work, say they would like to have more time on their books,” said Peters, the Poisoned Pen's owner, trying to give Coben the chance to say that, diligence and constancy aside, sometimes the creative process is not entirely predictable. She said that Dennis Lehane had once told an audience at the

“It's not like I'm an artist,” Coben said. “I come from a background where people worked. The plumber doesn't wake up and say, ‘Oh, I can't do pipes today.’”

11 years earlier learns conclusively from a photograph, seen just after his mother's funeral, that his brother is still alive. Myron Bolitar is hired to track down a female professional golfer's kidnapped son and stumbles upon treacherous secrets in the golfer's family history. And so on.

A few days after I would finish one Coben book—and I continued to find them eminently readable—I couldn't recall much about the story, or about the men and women who'd populated it.

When we sat down for lunch in the coffee shop of the Luxor, I began to wonder whether even Coben didn't sometimes find his characters forgettable. I had offered the recollection that Olivia, one of the protagonists of *The Innocent*, had spent some time in Nevada—a component of her past on which the plot hinges—and he drew a blank. “Really?” he said.

Olivia, I said. From his last book.

“Oh, right. I thought maybe you were talking about somebody you knew.”

The night before, in Scottsdale, Coben's book-signing event had been held at the Poisoned Pen, one of the largest crime-and-mystery bookstores in America, and the store's owner, Barbara Peters, began the evening with a Q&A. When she asked Coben about the sources of his inspiration, he cocked his head and said that something always comes, because he has no choice.

“It's not like I'm an artist,” he said. “If this book doesn't do well, and I say to my publisher, ‘I want the freedom to

store that, after the success of *Mystic River*, his publisher had let him tear up his contract and start fresh, “because they wanted to give him whatever he wanted so they didn't lose him.”

Lehane, she recalled, made no requests for bonus money or special marketing efforts, but asked for more time instead. “He said, ‘What I really want is an extra year, because I'm not happy rushing this book out without more time to think,’” Peters said. Apparently, he'd been forced to get an earlier book finished in time for Father's Day and had never been happy with it. “Do you ever feel that way?” Peters asked Coben.

“No,” Coben said slowly. “I've toured with Dennis, and we know each other well. But Dennis and I don't do the same thing. He's somebody who comes out with a book every two years or so.” He said he sees more time not so much as an opportunity to improve a book but as an excuse not to finish. “My first book was due October 1, and by spectacular coincidence, I finished it on September 30,” he said.

It isn't that Coben has gone out of his way to have the most commercial success he can. That's been completely *on his way*, the most natural path he could have taken. “There's no calculation: I can't write what a lesser writer writes or what a better writer writes,” he said later. “This is what I write.”

Eric Konigsberg is a reporter for *The New York Times* and the author of *Blood Relation* (2005).



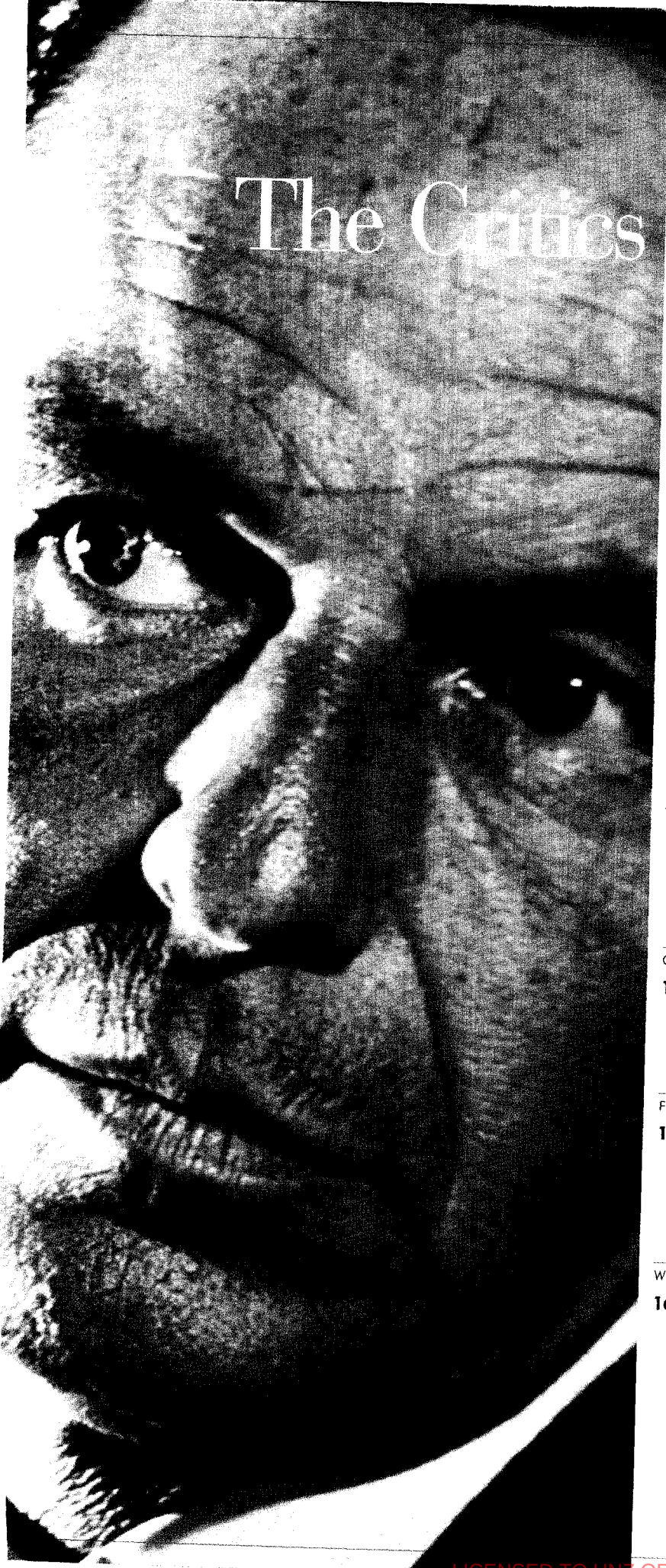
BOOKS

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OL' BLUE EYES

Frank Sinatra pauses in the studio. Benjamin Schwarz traces the ups and downs of the great crooner's career in "His Second Act."

JOHN BRYSON/SYGMA/CORBIS



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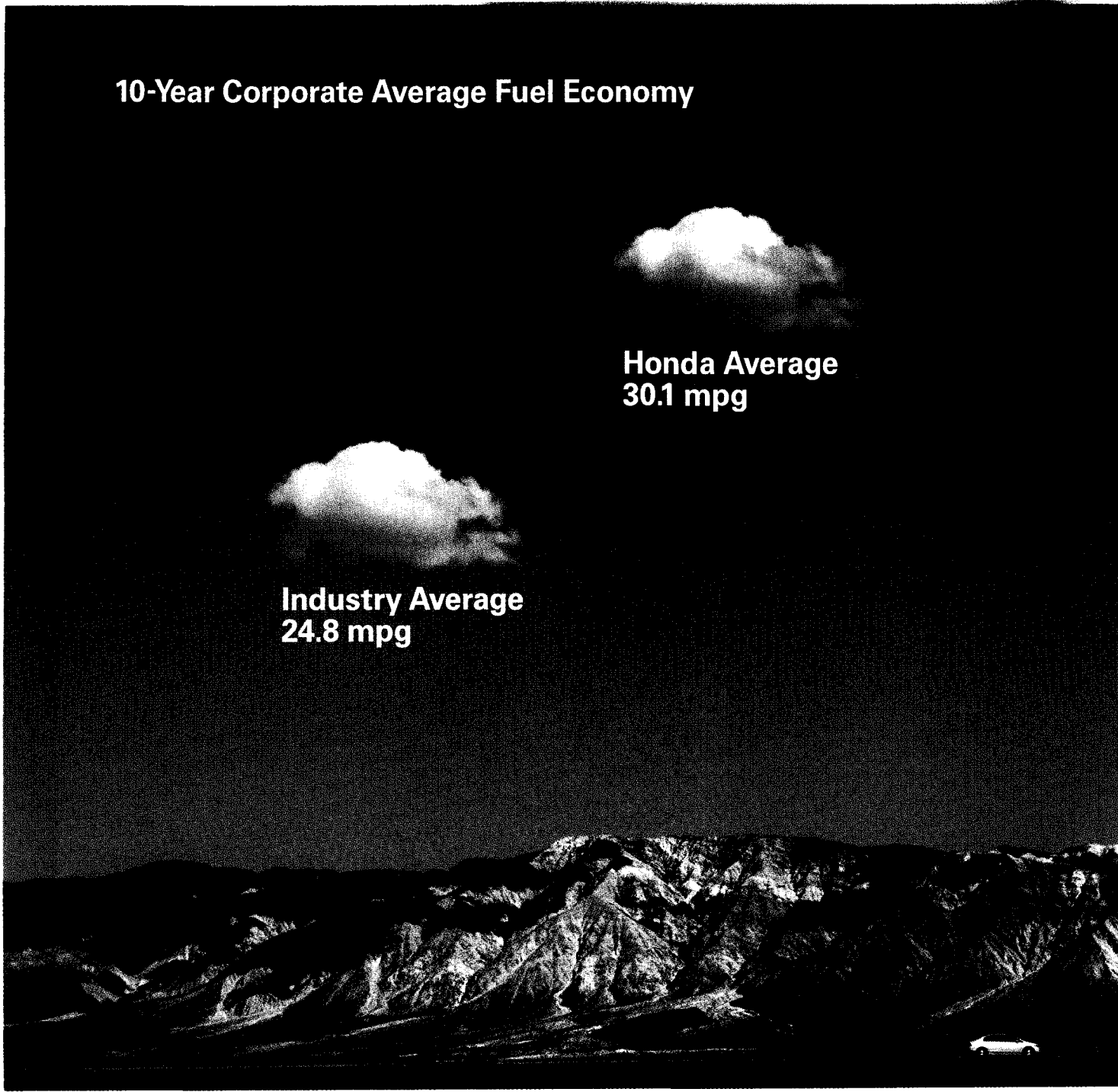
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FRANK SINATRA creating
the Great American Songbook

BOOKS

Editor's Choice: How Frank Sinatra staged the most spectacular comeback in American cultural history

His Second Act

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

Frank Sinatra, the greatest vocalist in the history of American music, elevated popular song to an art. He was a dominant power in the entertainment industries—radio, records, movies, gambling—and a symbol of the Mafia's reach into American public life. More profoundly than any figure excepting perhaps Elvis Presley, Sinatra changed the style and popular culture of the American Century.

Frank Sinatra: The Man, the Music, the Legend, a long-awaited collection of essays gathered from a famed 1998 conference at Hofstra University and edited by Jeanne Fuchs and Ruth Prigozy, probes various aspects of Sinatra's influence in his long career (he was a national

figure from 1939 until his death, in 1998). But it insists, both explicitly and in its editors' selection of subjects and themes, that the "proper historical setting" for its subject "is the fifties."

Although that point can be debated, the 1950s—more precisely, the period from 1953 to the mid-1960s—was clearly the era of Sinatra's supreme artistic achievement and deepest cultural sway. It amounted to the most spectacular second act in American cultural history. In the early 1940s, following his break with the Tommy Dorsey band, Sinatra had emerged, thanks largely to swooning bobby-soxers, as pop music's biggest star and a hugely popular Hollywood actor. By the end of the decade,

he was all but washed up, having lost his audience owing to shifting musical tastes and to disenchantment over his reported ties to the Mob, and over his divorce, which followed a widely publicized affair with Ava Gardner, whom he married in 1951. He soon lost his voice (he would never fully recover his consistently accurate intonation and precise pitch), his movie contract with MGM, his record contract with Columbia, and Gardner—their passionate, mutually corrosive entanglement plainly and permanently warped him. But in 1953, his harrowing, Oscar-winning performance as the feisty, doomed Maggio in *From Here to Eternity* made him a star again.

More important, in that year he also signed with the trendsetting, L.A.-based Capitol Records, a move that afforded him his greatest role: his own musical and stylistic reinvention. The 16 concept albums that followed, his most remarkable achievement and among America's enduring cultural treasures, defied public taste and redirected it toward what would be known as the Great American Songbook. With his key collaborator, the arranger Nelson Riddle, Sinatra jettisoned the yearning, sweet-voiced crooning of his Columbia years in favor of a richer voice, greater rhythmic invention, and more knowing and conversational phrasing. He had always said that Billie Holiday was his most profound musical influence, and at Capitol, accompanied by Harry Edison, the former trumpeter for Count Basie, he was even more deeply open to jazz influence, as he invested up-tempo songs (which he had rarely performed at Columbia) with a tough, assured swing. For their part, jazz musicians overwhelmingly selected him "the greatest-ever male vocalist" in a 1956 poll, and Lester Young and Miles Davis—never partial to white musicians—ardently praised him.

And now, apparently because of his tortured relationship with Gardner, Sinatra burned off all remaining affectations and sentimentality and sang his ballads with bitterness, directness, and masculine vulnerability ("Ava taught him how to sing a torch song," Riddle said). A midcentury artist with an admitted "overacute capacity for sadness as well as elation," Sinatra invested those largely decades-old ballads with a modern anxiety and ambivalence. In his album sequences and in such swinging songs as "Night and Day," "Day In, Day Out," "Old Devil Moon," and especially his greatest recording, the 1956 "I've Got You Under My Skin," he juxtaposed bravado and panic, ecstasy and uncertainty.

With this new sensibility, which Pete Hamill has aptly termed the "Tender Tough Guy," Sinatra created—as several of the pieces in this collection illuminate—the most important model of masculinity for a generation of Americans. He had



MARILYN MONROE in a tender moment, photographed by Sammy Davis Jr.

transformed his persona from that of a skinny, boyish, even androgynous heart-throb with Brylcreemed curls, too-big jackets, sailor suits (!), and floppy bow ties into that of a suave man of authority and sensitivity in crisp, slim-line suits. He appealed not to teenage girls but to their mothers and fathers. The jazz critic Gary Giddins, one of the most astute writers on the singer, summed up the transformed Sinatra: "Above all, he was adult. He sang to adults."

In so doing, Sinatra held at bay the cultural changes that had helped bring about his earlier downfall. He came of age musically in a peculiar period: the only era in which jazz, as played by the big bands, was the most popular musical form. Since the 1940s, he had been recognized as the leader of a movement to

establish the music of such composers as Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Rodgers and Hart, and Jerome Kern as an art form, but postwar audiences turned away from Sinatra primarily because they no longer wanted to hear the music he wanted to sing. Ironically, his decision to embark on a solo musical career hastened the demise of the big bands and unmoored a mass audience from sophisticated popular music. While urbane songs would have appealed to audiences who danced to Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw, until Sinatra altered popular taste, the postwar soloists—even such savvy chanteuses as Peggy Lee and Rosemary Clooney—made their fortunes and kept their contracts by recording novelty songs. Sinatra saw this firsthand, when Columbia enjoined him to record the godawful "Mama Will Bark," with the busty comedienne Dagmar (it's

PHOTO BY SAMMY DAVIS, JR. COURTESY OF AITOVISE GORE DAVIS

as bad as you imagine—complete with simulated barking).

On his hugely popular and artistically glorious Capitol albums, Sinatra expanded and enlivened the repertory of standard American songs (astonishingly, before his recording of it, "I've Got You Under My Skin" hadn't been a significant entry in the Porter catalog) and became its most commanding interpreter. With his clear, relaxed enunciation and sublime phrasing, he also codified the sound and rhythm of casually elegant spoken American English. The seamlessness, ingenuity, and rightness of that phrasing is readily apparent when you try to sing along with him and still can't foretell his stresses and caesuras in a recording you may have heard a hundred times. (David Finck and Samuel L. Chell dissect Sinatra's vocal artistry in two succinct and exceptionally precise pieces in this collection.)

Nonetheless, Sinatra's musical achievement—which constituted perhaps the last sustained occasion when elite and mass musical taste would coalesce—was really only a prolonged holding action made possible by his preternatural talent and charisma. As Will Friedwald, the most thorough analyst of Sinatra's musicianship, wrote, Sinatra was, for all his popular appeal, "completely out of touch with American culture as it evolved from [the late 1940s] onwards." Friedwald—no surprise—excoriates popular culture, not Sinatra, for this. But whether or not you agree, the fact that, as Giddins points out, Sinatra's artistic maturity coincided with the peak of Elvis's appeal shows the extent to which Sinatra's imperishable accomplishment was a cultural outlier. And though Sinatra's second act clearly represented the justifiably bemoaned final triumph of grown-up pop-cultural taste, Sinatra himself helped hasten the inevitable triumph of youth culture. His musical persona may have been "adult," but he insisted on merging that with his public face, which was too often anything but. You could hardly blame the kids for rejecting him.

To be sure, Sinatra, an exquisitely complicated man, was doggedly committed

to racial equality long before it was a fashionable cause. He was also a consistently generous artist and capable of astonishing grace and thoughtfulness. But—aside from consorting with killers; procuring for the doped-up, mobbed-up, and coarsely exploitative JFK (if anything, Camelot sullied Sinatra, not the other way around); and regularly displaying a potentially murderous temper—he perversely made sure that his ardent listeners grasped that his juvenile, vulgar, and increasingly pathetic Rat Pack antics couldn't be reconciled with his carefully wrought musical reinvention. This was made clear on his 1966 album *Sinatra at the Sands*, which contains both his lovely and swinging renditions of "Angel Eyes" and "Luck Be a Lady," accompanied by the Count Basie Orchestra, and his notoriously cringe-inducing monologue that combined yucky corniness and mean-spiritedness. If this was mature urbanity, who needed it?

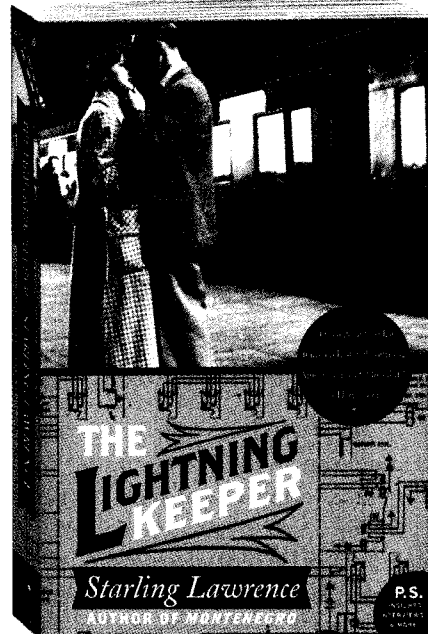
Sinatra gave Sammy Davis Jr. his career, and his fiercely loyal, public embrace of Davis, often in the teeth of bigotry, was principled and heroic. But in their Rat Pack shows, he made Davis the butt of race-oriented jokes, and Davis knew a Sinatra both vindictive and considerate, both scummy and courtly. **Photo by Sammy Davis, Jr.** assembles beautiful and revealing snaps that this gifted amateur took in the 1950s and '60s of the Hollywood elite at play (including a sad and sweet image of a little-black-dressed Marilyn tucking a small boy into bed as a late-night party hums in the other room), of Vegas showgirls, of politicians and mobsters, of Martin Luther King Jr. And of course there is Sinatra, in all his dangerous glamour—joshing with Shirley MacLaine and the rest of his band of nocturnal carousers, brooding, on the phone in sharply tailored pajamas (no doubt after sleeping through a good chunk of the day). Speaking of that glamour, Davis said, "Only two guys are left who are not the boy next door: Cary Grant and Frank Sinatra." ■

Benjamin Schwarz is *The Atlantic's* literary editor and national editor.

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BOOKS

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Babes in the Woods

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

I spent the summer I was 19 at my parents' house on the north shore of Long Island, which was pleasant enough but hardly the last word in teenage excitement. When a friend called and invited me to spend a weekend with her family in Delaware, I was packed by bedtime. At first light, I was sitting at the Stony Brook train station with a round-trip ticket and a tin of cookies for my friend's mother. Life had taken a delightful turn, and the only fly in the ointment was that a young man was trying, desperately, to catch my eye.

He walked past me once, turned around and walked by again, and finally made a wide circle around the bench, sat down next to me, and said, "Hi, Caitlin!" That caught my attention. "Hi," I said politely and tried to place him. He was scruffy and a few years older than me—was he a handyman my mother had hired? There was something mocking about him, but he asked about my parents very respectfully, calling my father "Mr. Flanagan." He wanted to know if I still lived on Gnarled Hollow Road. I did. He said that he'd called me the week before, but that no one had answered. And then he did something that changed my feeling of annoyance to one of alarm: He rattled off my parents' phone number.

My mother had taught me quite a few things about men: I should be wary of those I did not know, polite to those I did, and tough as nails with those who were disrespectful or in any way threatening. But none of these rules seemed to apply in this situation.

That young man didn't do me any harm, but neither was he a good-natured kidder. The train arrived, and he lingered



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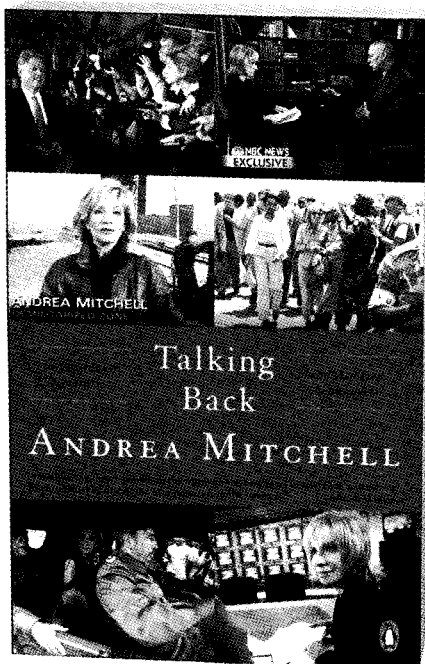
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behind me as I boarded it. Then he pulled himself up to the bottom step and called my name. When he had my attention, he said—quietly, but with just enough menace that I have remembered him to this day—"You ought to be more careful about what you write on that tag." I stared dumbly at the cardboard luggage tag I had filled in so carefully. He jumped back down to the platform, the train pulled away, and that was the last I saw of him.

He'd tricked me by using two things against me: some personal information and my youth. My ability to recognize social cues, to distinguish an approach that was well-intentioned from one that was threatening, was not what it would be in five years' time. I wasn't an unworldly person or an especially naive one; I was just young. My mother hadn't left me at the train station for five minutes before someone caught sight of me—a pretty girl, dressed for an excursion. That's the way of things, I suppose: Set your children loose, as you someday must, and there will be all kinds of people waiting for them.

The history of civilization is the history of sending children out into the world. The child of a 17th-century weaver would have been raised and educated at home, prey to the diseases and domestic accidents of his time, but protected from strangers who meant him harm. As the spheres of home and work began to separate, cleaving parents from their sons and daughters, children faced dangers of an altogether different kind. The world is not, nor has it ever been, full of people who prey upon children. But it has always had more than enough of them, and it always will. Think of the Children's Crusade: Several thousand children marched out of Cologne to liberate the Holy Land but barely made it to Brindisi; they ended up dead or

sold into sex slavery, an army of innocents easily picked off within a few weeks' march from home.

With the Internet, children are marching out into the world every second of every day. They're sitting in their bedrooms—wearing their retainers, topped up with multivitamins, radiating the good care and safekeeping that is their lot in life in America at the beginning of the new century—and they're posting photographs of themselves, typing private sentiments, unthinkingly laying down a trail of bread crumbs leading straight to their dance recitals and Six Flags trips and Justin Timber-

lake concerts, places where anyone with an interest in retainer-wearing 13-year-olds is free to follow them. All that remains to be seen is whether anyone *will* follow them, and herein lies a terrifying uncertainty, which neither skeptics nor doom-sayers can deny: The Internet has opened a portal into what used to be the inviolable space of the home, through which anything, harmful or harmless, can pass. It won't be closing anytime soon—or ever—and all that parents can do is hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

Those preparing for the worst will find their darkest fears realized in *To Catch a Predator*. The show is a spin-off of the news program *Dateline NBC*, and every episode features the same satisfying format: The network has partnered with an organization called Perverted Justice, which is dedicated to luring and then busting the creepy men who use the Internet to seduce youngsters. The team creates a decoy: an online presence claiming to be a teenager who eagerly participates in increasingly pornographic online chat with an adult male. The "teen" arranges an assignation—the parents are supposedly out of town for the weekend—and the scumbag

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wanders into a setup par excellence: NBC has the house rigged with cameras and microphones, local law enforcement is watching the whole thing from a van parked at the curb, and cops are hiding in the bushes ready to bring the guy down if he bolts.

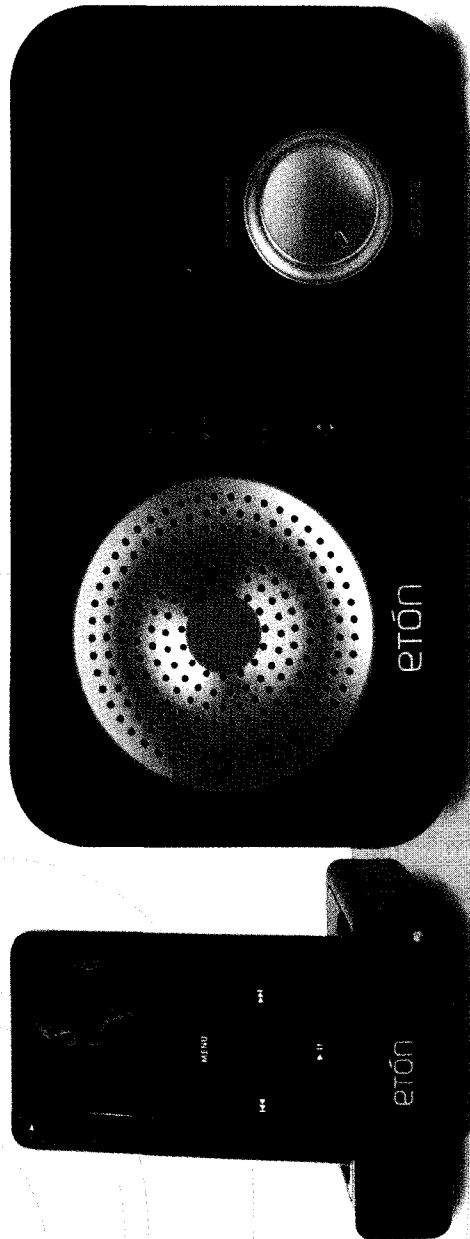
What makes the show so fantastic is not only the deeply satisfying element of watching justice instantly meted out. It's also that before the perp gets cuffed and loaded into the paddy wagon he's grilled by the show's host/anchor, a journalist named Chris Hansen, who in every episode gets to deliver, straight-faced, lines that sound like they come from a Will Ferrell movie, as when he confronts a pedophile (hell-bent on bestiality and dessert) with the evidence against him: "You're naked. There's a 14-year-old girl. You're chasing a cat around. You've got Cool Whip." The show's been on the air long enough that when Hansen suddenly walks into the room and confronts the predator, it's a bit like the moment when Allen Funt would suddenly show up in the middle of a screwy day at the dry cleaners. ("I knew it!" the perps sometimes say when Hansen appears.)

To Catch a Predator puts an innocent in contact with a trickster and then allows the inevitable to take place. But after you watch a few episodes, it dawns on you that the naifs in this equation are actually the idiot perverts who take the bait and end up in the slammer. Calling this sad-sack collection of wankers and flashers "predators" accords them a level of evil genius they haven't earned; most of them look like they couldn't track down the towel department in a Wal-Mart. I won't lie: Sweet little Mary may swear like a sailor when she logs on to MySpace; but unless she's the kind of gal who responds to a stranger's request to "cum in you" with a cheery "I don't want to get preppers!" she should be safe. And a significant number of the decoys who successfully lure predators are male, a fact that one senses is a grave disappointment to the producers and probably reveals less about Internet crimes than about

Feel The Sound

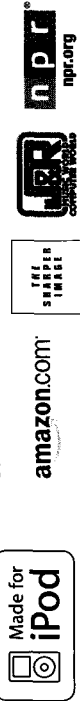
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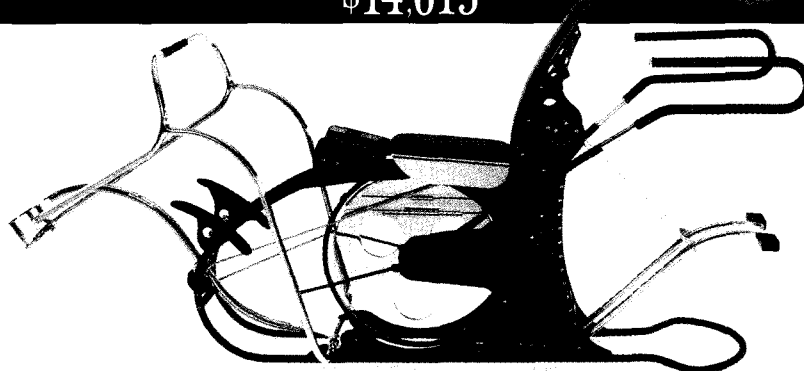
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one of the sad, old truths about sexual initiation for gay teenage boys.

Hansen has written a book about the program, which he created. The book is also called *To Catch a Predator*, and its subtitle—"Protecting Your Kids From Online Enemies Already in Your Home"—is true to the spirit of the show, which involves both informing viewers and scaring the bejesus out of them. When I was a kid, the most frightening moment in horror movies occurred when the terrified girl learned that the creepy telephone caller was making his calls from "inside the house." It never made any sense—nobody had two phone lines back then. But the idea itself was horrifying enough to warrant a bit of poetic license. The sensation of being home—safe, behind locked doors—must have some strong hold on the human psyche, because we're particularly outraged and horrified by crimes that occur to people in their own houses. As hideous as the Polly Klaas kidnapping-and-murder case was, it had an added resonance because the 12-year-old had been in her own room—*home*—before she was taken into the night and killed. Hansen's subtitle, lurid though it may be, speaks to the fear that makes parents so queasy: Flooding through that Internet connection are any number of people whose interest in their children could be predatory.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children maintains that one out of five kids who use the Internet has been propositioned for sex. It's hard to know just how accurately such events can be quantified, and when I first read the statistic, I found it hard to believe that, if indeed so many children were being propositioned, more parents weren't uniting in outrage, rather than wiring up their kids at a blistering pace. My friends with teenagers were very open with them and were well-informed about the dangers of the Internet; I couldn't imagine one out of five of those kids being propositioned by a stranger and not telling their parents.

But Hansen provides a second bit of information that made me wonder if that

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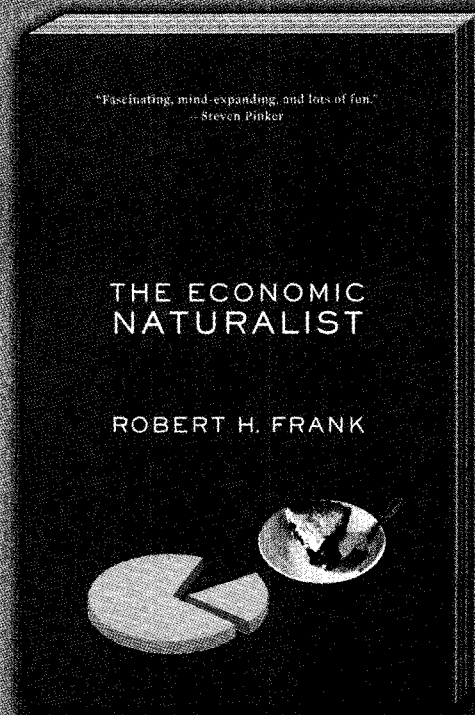
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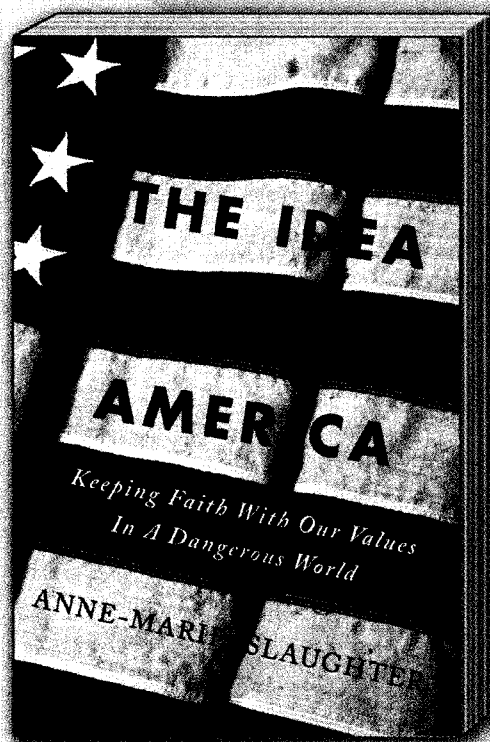
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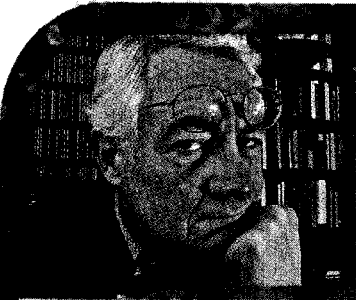
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statistic wasn't in fact on the low side. As part of the first episode of his show, Hansen convened a panel of tweens and teens, among them children of some of his colleagues at NBC, and asked how many of them had been "approached online by someone in a sexual way that made you feel uncomfortable." Almost all the kids raised their hands. Then he asked how many had told their parents. Not a hand went up. And when he asked why they hadn't told their parents, all the kids in the room said they didn't tell because they didn't want their parents to take away their Internet connections.

Suddenly, it all made sense to me: Teenagers don't tell their parents that

we know for sure is that our children are living in the midst of a technological revolution, and that they're drawn to it like moths to a flame.

Most parents of teenage girls with Internet connections will tell you that their daughters' physical safety isn't in jeopardy—they've taken all kinds of precautions they think ensure this—but that the online experience is doing nothing for the girls' peace of mind. Not many people are as ill-served by having their natterings subjected to instantaneous, global transmission as adolescent girls. In the first place, these girls' feelings can be hurt by even a well-intentioned comment or question, and having a

A portal has opened in the once inviolable space of the home, through which anything, harmful or harmless, can pass.

someone nasty got through to them for the same reason I didn't tell my parents that kids were dropping acid at a party—because they wouldn't let me go to those parties anymore. That's the horrible, inescapable fact of coming of age: The moment you choose the world over your parents, you've chosen to make your own decisions about what's safe and what's not, with only your own wits to protect you.

Just how dangerous is the unsupervised use of the Internet by adolescents? Nobody knows. I suspect that in a decade or so we'll all have a very different set of beliefs about how and when and for what purposes teenagers should be allowed to go online. When something new comes along, it takes a while for parents to sort out what's safe and what isn't, and even longer for their conclusions to become commonly held assumptions about good parenting. In the future it may be unheard-of for a teenage girl from a loving family to disappear into her room every night for two hours of unsupervised e-chatting and instant messaging and MySpacing. Then again, it may be even more common than it is today. All

caustic remark that would have been bad enough if kept between two people suddenly unleashed to the whole clique, team, or school can be a wretched experience. Furthermore, because this new technology can make the old girl standbys of gossip and social exclusion and taunting more efficient—and therefore more cruel—many girls arrive at school each morning having experienced the equivalent of a public hazing in the privacy of their own rooms. While Johnny's upstairs happily sneaking hard-core pornography past his Internet filter, poor Judy is next door weeping into her pillow because everyone in the eighth grade now knows that she still uses pads, not tampons. (Meanwhile, in a galaxy far, far away, Mom and Dad are trying to figure out how to watch *Dancing With the Stars* now that the remote's on the fritz again.)

If you have an adolescent and you're clueless about the "social networking" sites they love, it's probably a good idea to pick up a copy of a first-rate new guidebook, *Generation MySpace*, by Candice M. Kelsey, a teacher at a private high school in Los Angeles. She's

NEW FICTION

BY JOSEPH O'NEILL

Michael Chabon's first proper novel since his Pulitzer-winning *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* (2000) rests on a wonderful counterfactual scenario, in which, you might say, *Northern Exposure* meets *Fiddler on the Roof*. In 1940, the U.S.

government permits the settlement of Jewish refugees in Sitka, Alaska, and when the republic of Israel collapses in 1948, Congress creates the temporary, self-governing Federal District of Sitka for the benefit of "the Frozen Chosen." It's a grimly flourishing, Yiddish-speaking zone of shtarkers and schlemiels and shtinkers, a place with "no polar bears. No igloos. No reindeer. Mostly just a lot of angry Indians, fog, and rain, and half a century of a [profound] sense of mistakeness." It's also where, on the gloomy eve of the district's reversion to Alaska (when more than 3 million "yids" will be stateless once again), a nihilistic, alcoholic detective named Landsman investigates the murder of a chess-playing junkie genius—and enmeshes the reader in a blackly suspenseful, densely imagined yarn involving ultra-Orthodox gangsters, mystical shenanigans, and a vast right-wing conspiracy.

There's no doubting the entertainment on offer here; but I could not help feeling tantalized, as I was zoomed along the hairpin plot, by glimpses of more lastingly nourishing fare. Dangling over this generic crime story are a fabulist's profound concerns about the spiritual and political directions actually taken by Jews and, for that matter, by a United States touched by fanatical Christianity. It's tricky, though, to reach for such offerings when you're holding on to your hat.



THE YIDDISH POLICEMEN'S UNION
by Michael Chabon
HarperCollins

Joseph O'Neill is the author, most recently, of *Blood-Dark Track: A Family History* (2001).



the kind of super-pretty, nonjudgmental young adult kids adore, and seems to have a sensible grasp of both the fears of parents and the desires of teenagers. She's also particularly perceptive about why MySpace can cause a teenage girl so much pain. As she began to understand the site's increasing hold on her students, she writes,

fewer and fewer days would go by that didn't end with a distraught student sitting on the floor of my office in search of advice about how to respond to various MySpace-related dilemmas.

Kelsey describes an experiment she conducts each year in which kids are asked not to log on for an entire week. Many of them can't hack it, but the ones who do often find themselves happier and calmer.

Some of the most harmless aspects of MySpace would have crushed me at 14.

or the additional opportunities for cat-tiness it provides, but the fathomless narcissism of the young. There's no more ardent devotee of a MySpace profile than its creator, lovingly adjusting the lighting on the perfect self-portrait, changing the song that serenades it, the graphics that surround it. The page can speak broadly to others, but others are almost beside the point; every profile is a sonnet to the self. Today's girls spend hours looking at their MySpace profiles, fiddling and tinkering with them—much as I once sat in front of my vanity mirror, holding my hair up and letting it fall, smiling one way and then the other. For girls, the powerful need to be alone in their bedrooms—dreaming, writing in diaries, looking at themselves in the mirror—is married to a kind of exhibitionism. Why was I trying out my hair so many different ways, if not to calculate its potential effect on others? The Internet makes it possible to combine

The primary engine of MySpace's stupendous growth isn't the Internet, but the fathomless narcissism of the young.

Members get to list their "Top 8" friends, a list they can change at whim. It's an ingenious number, because it's just large enough to make exclusion really hurt—*eight* people, and there wasn't any room at all for me?

One of the great paradoxes of our age is that at the exact moment when a huge number of teachers, parents, and school administrators have dedicated themselves to the emotional well-being and self-confidence of adolescent girls, a technology has come along that's virtually guaranteed to undermine that confidence. A girl can go to school and happily discover that it's possible for her to become a scientist when she grows up, but that may be cold comfort when she comes home to discover that five people just dropped her from their Top 8.

The primary engine of MySpace's stupendous growth isn't the Internet

these two opposed desires: to be alone trying something out and to be exposed in public for everyone to see. A decade from now, a large group of parents may be telling anyone who will listen that this is a very dangerous combination indeed.

Last year, all of a sudden, the phrase *Club Penguin* entered my house via my 8-year-old twin sons, and they were so completely immersed in recounting to me its endless complexities that there was no way to slow them down and elicit a concise definition. I did grasp that it was on the Internet and that it was "safe"—they kept repeating this to me, as though somehow they'd absorbed (accurately) that it was an essential part of the incantation that gets a mother to allow you to do something online. So one day, with me sitting beside them and

feeling as though I were summoning Beelzebub, they logged on and played for a while—their first Internet gaming experience.

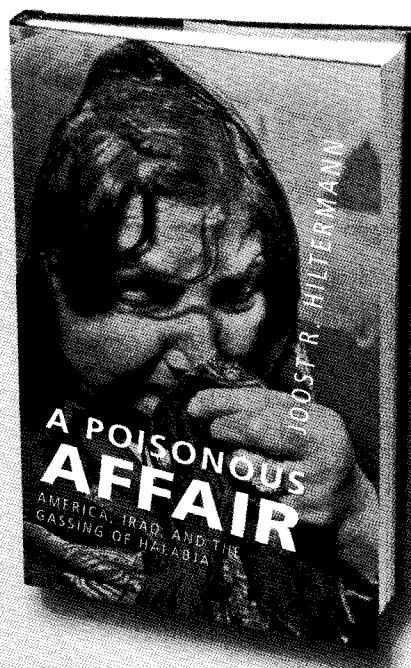
What fun they had! Club Penguin is a cute, happy virtual world in which you create an adorable little penguin in whose guise you can travel to all sorts of fun spots and play video games (making pizzas against the clock, playing ice hockey, going inner-tubing), for which you win coins. With the coins you can buy clothes and furniture and cool stuff for your virtual igloo. The boys loved it. Everyone loved it. Club Penguin was the most happening event of the second grade; to be denied it was to be denied not just a pleasure but an essential mode of schoolyard discussion and inclusion, a way of being a second-grader.

But I never let them play again, because something about it scared me: The penguins could chat with each other. True, the chatting is monitored by paid professionals and a citizens' army of tattlers, children who've been members for more than 30 days and who've been commissioned as "Secret Agents" to loiter in the public spaces and report on inappropriate chat, including the exchange of telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. But these protocols only highlight the paradox at Club Penguin's core: It's certainly the safest way for unsupervised children to talk to potentially malevolent strangers—but why would you want them to do that in the first place?

Shortly after that first visit, once my interfering children had been packed off to school, I made myself a nice cup of coffee and logged on. I chose a pink penguin, and because no versions of my real name were available, I picked one of my mother's nicknames for me. But—O, hated Internet, and its font of unwanted knowledge—even that turned out to be taken, so I had to be "Tootsabella2."

For a long while nobody wanted anything to do with me (I cannot adequately describe how much this felt like a real-life snubbing), so I just waddled around, wallflower at the orgy. It was immediately apparent that girls and boys have very different attitudes about what to do

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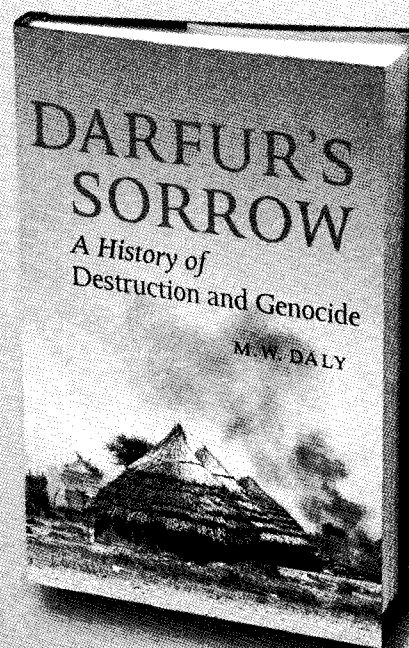


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in Club Penguin. The girls want to hang out, chat, and send little hearts to people, and the boys want to play video games. It's this dynamic that makes social-networking sites so much more dangerous for girls than for boys: It's in girls' nature to form relationships, to trade intimacies, to console and confide. It's also in the nature of the Internet to allow emotions to escalate in the blink of an eye; indeed, many of the traits that concern parents of adolescent girls—meanness, aggressive flirting with boys, budding Internet addictions—are clearly being born out there on the icebergs and snowcaps of Club Penguin. It has lowered the point of entry to social-networking sites from middle school to elementary school, opening up young children to a type of interaction that even tweens and teenagers often find overwhelming and hurtful. Did I see anything dangerous happen? I did not. But I saw any number of flame wars, and—more unsettling—even more cases of penguins deep in happy conversation who suddenly vanished from the scene, perhaps off to a private chat in an out-of-the-way igloo, safe from the prying eyes of the Secret Agents.

The next time I logged on, I was at last befriended—or should I say, courted—by a wonderful blue penguin whom I'll call "Denks." He treated me the way a girl wants to be treated: He took me to great places, he paid for everything, and he showed me how to do things. We went sledding, we played Mancala, and Denks turned out to be excellent at Connect Four, so we played a lot of that, too.

I realized, during our second or third game, that I was having my very first online relationship. And as I sat there, dropping my blue pieces into the grid (something I'd done countless times in the real world with my own children), I wondered who was playing the game with me. The thought that Denks might actually be a pervy adult wasn't nearly as unsettling as the thought that he might really be a little boy somewhere, home from school for the day, entertaining himself by logging

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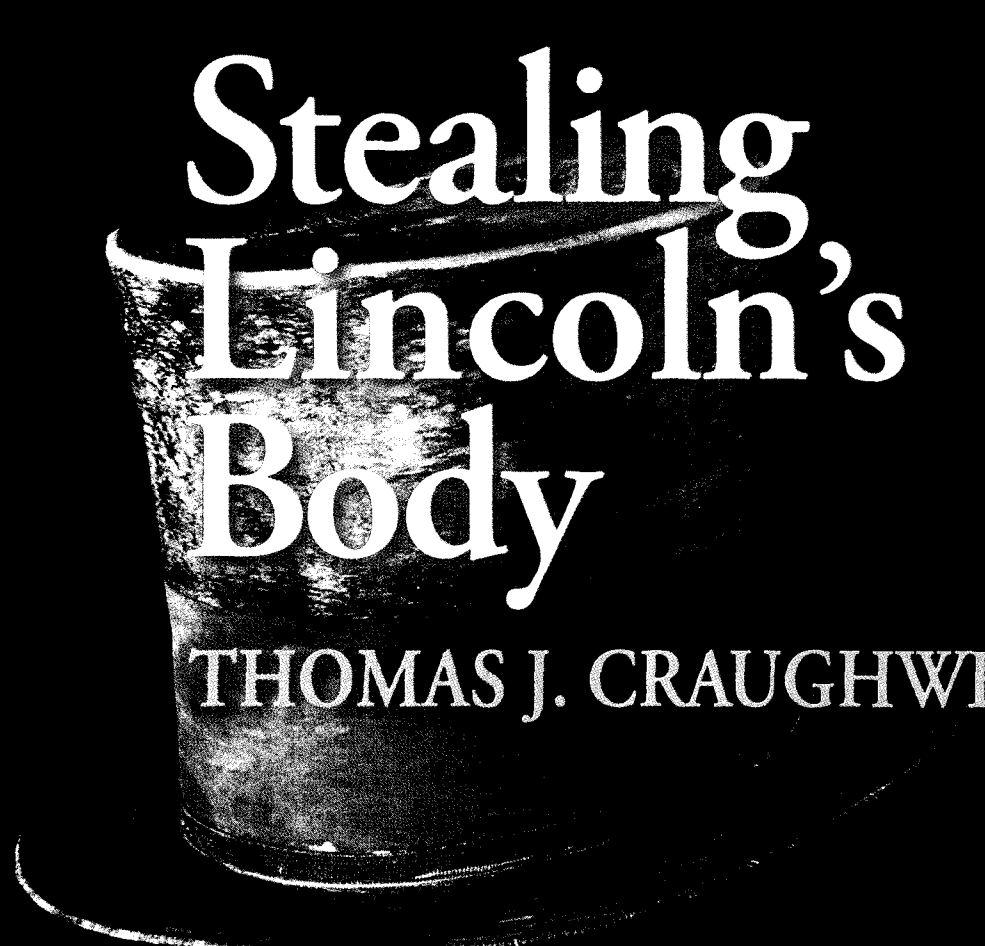
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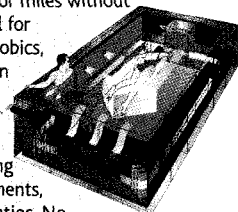
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on to a safe Web site and making friends with someone he thought was a little girl named Tootsabella.

MySpace has more than 100 million members and an unknown number of unregistered lurkers. Last spring, I became one of the latter. The site seemed hopelessly confusing at first, so to get started, I went to the search box and typed in the name of the high school closest to my house. It's the best girls' school in Los Angeles, with a walled and beautiful campus. As soon as I entered the name, the profiles of several girls popped up, and I clicked on the first one, a girl I'll call "Jenna." (Protecting her identity seems at

overhearing something private. And yet all of them were posted in a place that was designed not just to allow me in but to welcome me.

In that moment, the reality of my new life on the far side of a generation gap hit me fully. My fundamental understanding of privacy—the notion that one shouldn't listen in on the personal conversations of others—marked me as old. I'm not old because I like to peek into people's private lives; I'm old because I feel guilty about it. And I couldn't shake the feeling that—merely by trolling slowly and patiently through her pictures and conversations and lists of favorite things—I had become predatory. Dwelling secretly

MySpace has millions of members and an unknown number of unregistered lurkers. I have become one of the latter.

once important and ridiculous: I am taking pains to make private information that she has taken pains to make public.)

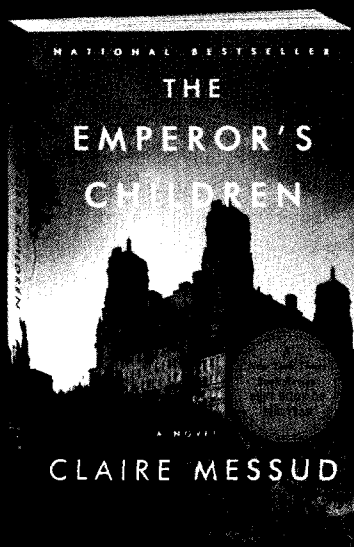
I could tell in a minute that this was no fake profile. I taught at a Los Angeles private school for many years, and the associations and places to which she made reference were all of a piece—at once too prosaic and too specific to be fabricated. She was a nice girl, you could tell that right away: Her profile picture showed her in a bikini at the beach, but it wasn't posed or self-consciously provocative. There were pictures from all kinds of parties and from trips to Disneyland and the Santa Monica Pier, and she had a steady boyfriend who posted to her page all the time, as well as a group of friends and family members who clearly thought the world of her. As I read her messages (especially the charming ones between her and her boyfriend, who had moved from "best friend" to "lover" status over the course of many sweet and well-documented months), I felt guilty, as though I were looking at things I shouldn't have been, as though I were lingering at a doorway,

in the private life of a beautiful young girl seemed inherently sinister, and I had to remind myself, over and over, that I was doing nothing wrong.

Because I'm the mom of two preteens growing up in a social milieu not so different from Jenna's, her MySpace page was a comfort to me. Her friends were nice, their pursuits and pleasures were wholesome enough (much more wholesome than what my friends and I were up to a quarter century ago), and her boyfriend was pure gold—a stalwart encourager of her studies, a champion of her parents and family whose own MySpace photo was a picture of the two of them. And because I'm someone who loves to read about the day-to-day nature of people's lives, the page was very interesting to me. But if I were the kind of person who regards beautiful teenage girls—especially cloistered ones from good families—as objects of irresistible erotic desire, I would not have been comforted or merely "interested"; I would have been excited, perhaps unbearably so.

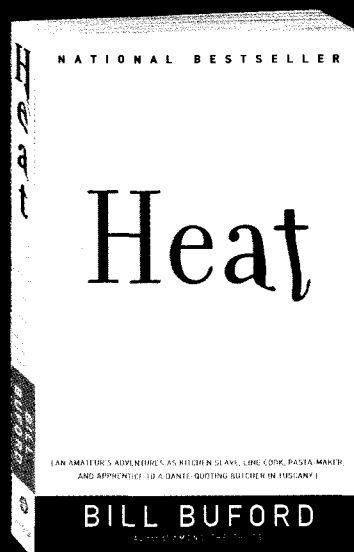
The current resurgence of girls' schools like Jenna's is based on the idea

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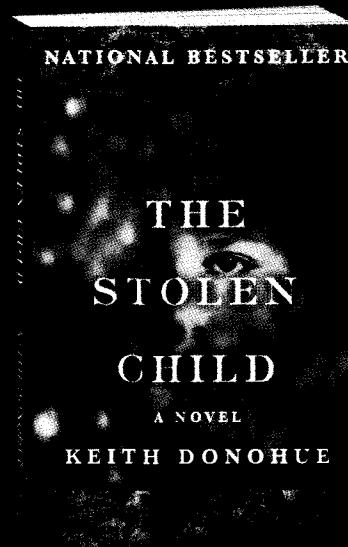
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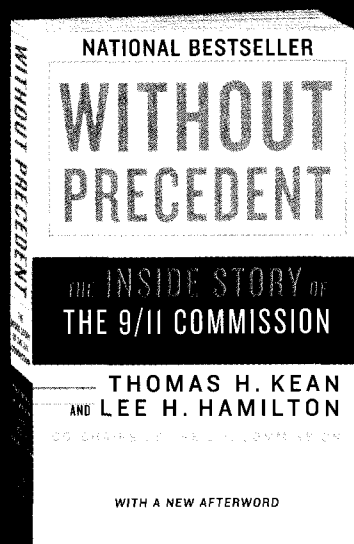
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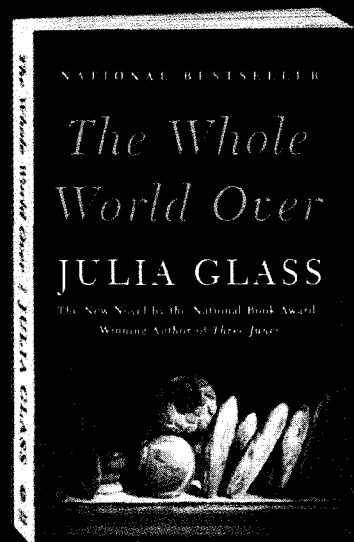


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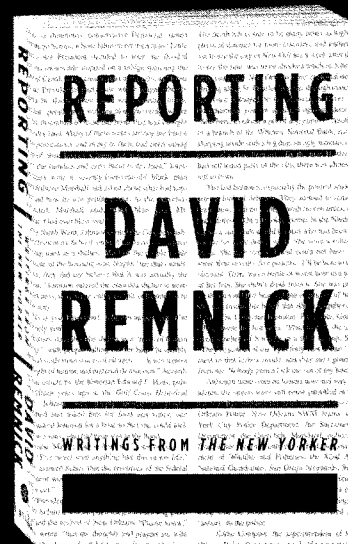
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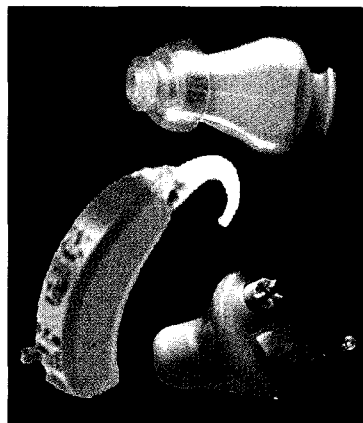
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that to become strong and powerful, girls need an environment in which they are protected from the various energies and appetites of adolescent boys. Free of the sexually charged atmosphere that will always pervade coed high schools, they can emerge and evolve in ways they never could in the presence of ogling, domineering boys. What contemporary parents of daughters—among them some of the most liberal-minded—have come to believe is not so different from what 19th-century parents believed: The sexual unfolding of a young girl is such a fraught process emotionally as well as physically that she needs to be carefully sheltered from the myriad forces that would seek to exploit or coarsen her as she reconciles the girl that she was with her biological destiny. That Jenna's parents would pour such a river of cash into her school tuition to grant her that safe and gentle place, and that—at the cost of not one cent—she would have created a MySpace page so dangerously revealing (in every sense of the word) is a terrific irony.

In the middle of Jenna's profile was a calendar relentlessly ticking down the days, hours, minutes, and seconds until graduation, which was a little more than a week away. I glanced up from the computer screen, through the scrim of leafy branches and out in the general direction of the school, startled by the realization that Jenna—this person I had never heard of 20 minutes before and about whose intimate life I now knew quite a bit—was a flesh-and-blood human being who was at that moment sitting in a building a few blocks away. I minimized the MySpace page on my screen and typed the name of Jenna's school into my search engine; the school's home page had a calendar button, and I clicked on it. I waited for the site to ask me for a password, but it didn't. Up came a complete record of Jenna's whereabouts for the following week: the exam schedule, the school awards ceremony, the graduation exercises, the faculty-appreciation luncheon.

Just about every kid in the country knows not to post his or her last name or address or phone number on the Internet. The paltry set of facts that I so innocently

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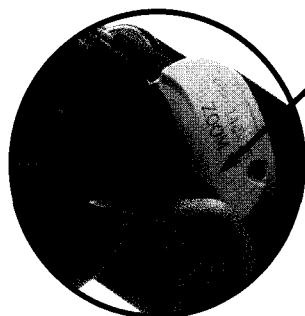
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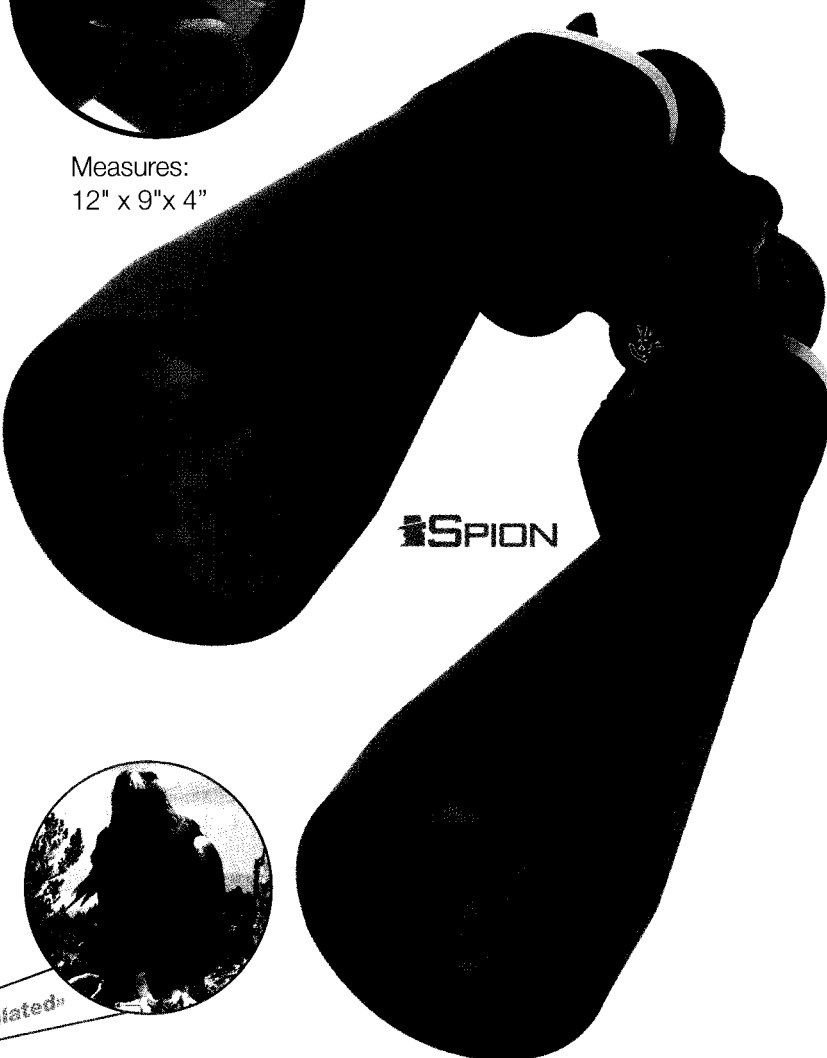
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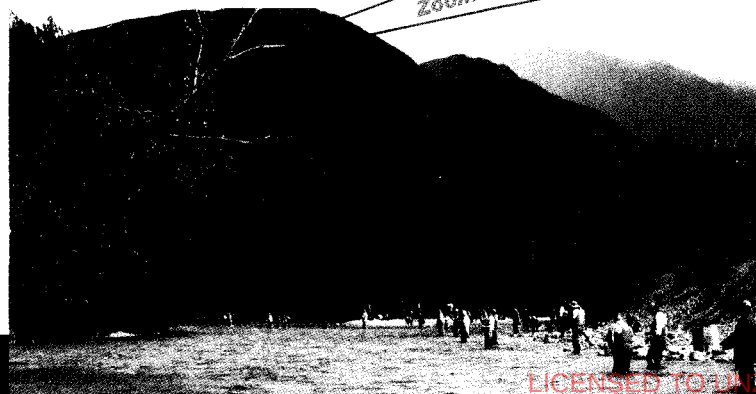


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wrote on my luggage tag so long ago are the only bits of information that kids guard jealously today. What they don't realize is that when the vast matrix of information easily available on the Internet is cross-referenced to the bountiful data they supply on MySpace, it can lead right to them. You tell me where your daughter goes to school and what sport she plays, and I'll tell you what day and time she'll be playing a game in a public park. Look around that park while you're watching the game—it's not inconceivable that one of the men there has come to catch a glimpse of a particular girl on the team.

I'm a well-intentioned, busybody mom who's forever sharing snacks and finding Kleenexes for kids I don't know. Like most former high-school teachers, I can't help thinking that whenever there are teenagers in a crowd, they must be on a field trip that I'm chaperoning. Something in my mien and voice must make them think so too—I've scolded some pretty tough-looking teenage boys for swearing around my children, and I've never received anything other than an embarrassed apology. There couldn't be any stranger in the world less inclined to cause harm to Jenna than I was—and thank God for that, because when I saw on the school's Web site that her graduation rehearsal was the following week, I flipped open my calendar and jotted down the day and time.

The day of the rehearsal was glorious, the way days in early June often are in this part of Los Angeles. I wore a pink linen skirt, a white sleeveless top, and a pair of low-heeled leather sandals, and I was so caught up in congratulating myself for approximating so exactly the look of a middle-aged, private-school mom that I had to remind myself that that's exactly what I am.

At the school, things were hopping: Younger girls were being dismissed, a party-supply truck was delivering hundreds of white folding chairs for the ceremony, a uniformed guard was waving car-pool drivers onto the horseshoe drive in front of the school. I walked down the sidewalk and passed the front gate—

something I've done literally hundreds of times (I used to live just down the street), but this time my heart was racing. I gave the guard a big, familiar smile, and she nodded and smiled back—she had the look of someone trying to place a familiar face. I kept walking down the block.

I wasn't sure what I was trying to prove to myself, but it certainly wasn't that someone like me could slip onto the campus—the school that several of my friends' children attend and that is my own polling place. I got to the end of the block and turned the corner; I knew the rehearsal was to be held in the field behind the main building, and I was hoping that maybe I could get at least a glimpse of the seniors. And that's when I heard them: Girls, a lot of them, were laughing and talking, and a teacher—her voice much louder, coming through speakers—was trying to impose some order. A piano played the first notes of something that sounded like a processional march, and it was soon joined by the sweet music of

a hundred girls singing: They were preparing for graduation by practicing their alma mater. They started, they stopped, they squealed with laughter. The teacher spoke into the microphone, more sternly this time, and they began again.

But that, you will be relieved to know, was as close as I got: The campus was surrounded by a wall as thick and imposing as any ever built around a school dedicated to the teaching and sheltering of girls. So I stood there feeling foolish, slid my camera back in my purse, and slunk away. The place to meet Jenna (without breaking the law) was not on the walled campus of a private school.

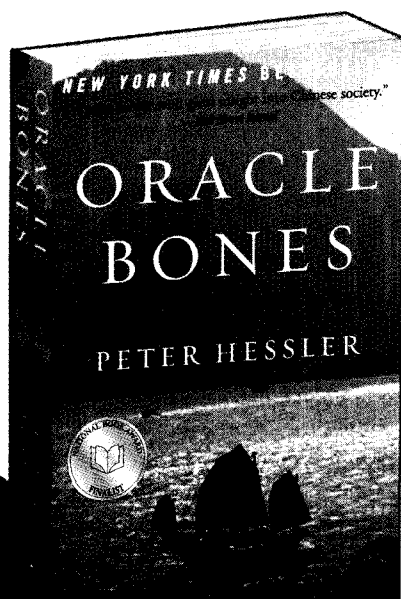
There would be other opportunities. Every so often, for the rest of the summer, I'd log on to Jenna's profile. I just missed the gang's trip to a hot-dog stand in Hollywood, and I would have gone to the fast-food place on Wilshire where they went for burgers one afternoon, but Jenna said she wasn't going,

so I skipped it, too. Whenever a group of girls came bouncing down my neighborhood shopping street, I scanned their faces, and once I thought I saw her through the big plate-glass window of Jamba Juice, but I wasn't sure. Her boyfriend went away on vacation for a couple of weeks, and she missed him terribly. But then he came back, and before you knew it, they were both ready to go off to college.

I sort of drifted away after that, although I keep an eye on Jenna now and then. Her university has a helpful online student directory, so I know her campus address and phone number; it was also surprisingly easy to learn the times and locations of two of her courses. According to Mapquest, I could be waiting outside her French class in a little over two hours. But what do you think I am—some kind of creep? ▀

Caitlin Flanagan is the author of *To Hell With All That* (2006). She is at work on *Girl Land*, a book about the emotional life of pubescent girls.

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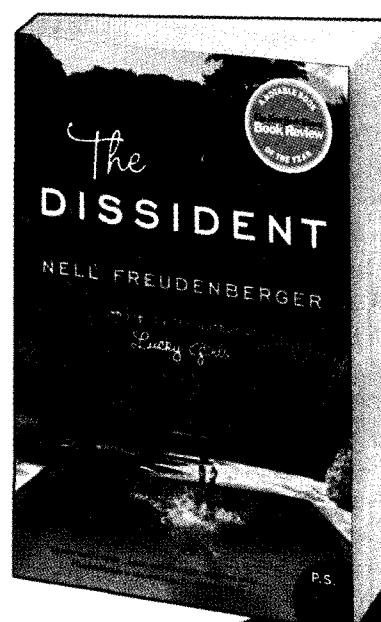
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BOOKS

Ian McEwan's new novella evokes his homeland's natural beauty and the straitened sexual manners of the early 1960s.

Think of England

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

A recent article in the London *Sunday Times* made the matter-of-fact statement that Ian McEwan had emerged in Britain as “our national writer.” I at once understood the justice of this opinion, but without at first being able to say what commanded my assent. A reading of McEwan's latest novella allows one to be fractionally less vague. The “national” character of this literary fragment is to be found in its simultaneous evocations of time and place, which allow the reader—at any rate the reader of a certain age who is of English provenance—to locate himself with satisfaction in an identifiable geography at a given date.

But it's not absolutely necessary to enjoy this shared relationship with either the story or the setting, for the subject is

universal. It is sex—or, to be more precise, sex and the loss of innocence.

It's perhaps more than a pleasing coincidence that the era is so well matched to the words of a famous poem by Philip Larkin, who for different reasons is now widely, if uneasily, accepted as contemporary England's national poet. His “*Annis Mirabilis*” opens like this:

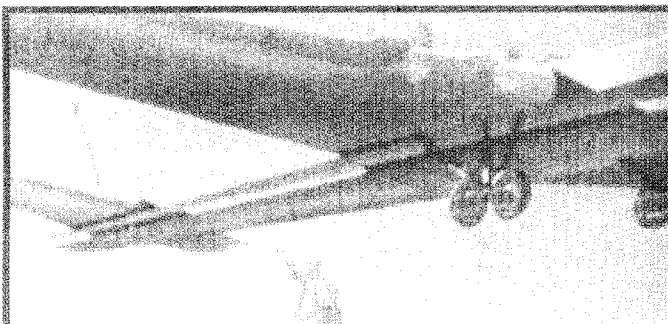
Sexual intercourse began
In nineteen sixty-three
(Which was rather late for me)—
Between the end of the *Chatterley* ban
And the Beatles' first LP.

It's possible from internal evidence to put the date of *On Chesil Beach* at mid-July 1962—in other words, immediately before this crucial cusp. Two newlyweds,

Edward and Florence, first meet at a rally for nuclear disarmament, but the trauma of the Cuban missile crisis is still just ahead. They know that an election is coming soon, and they both plan to vote for the Labour Party, hoping to end a long period of uninterrupted Tory hegemony. The country has not yet had to endure the absurdity of a state trial of Penguin Books for publishing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, at which E. M. Forster will emerge for the last time to testify for the defense.

“The '60s,” then, have not quite ignited. Divorce is infrequent, homosexuality and abortion are still illegal, the gallows still operates in British prisons, and—as if to underline and emphasize all this—both Edward and Florence are facing their honeymoon night as virgins. As Larkin

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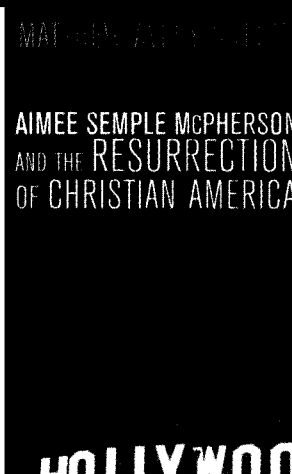
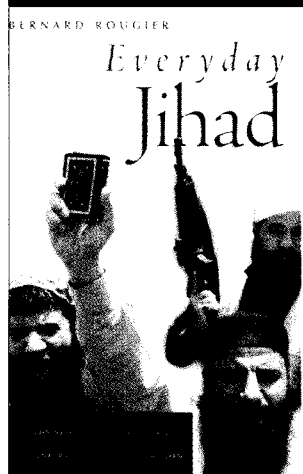
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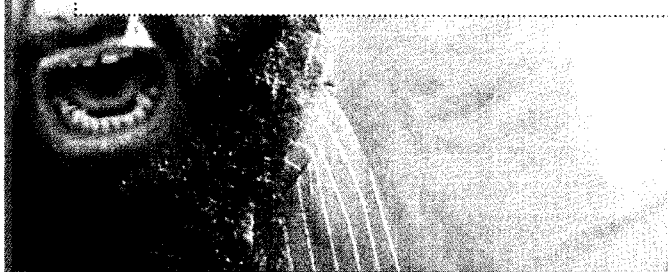
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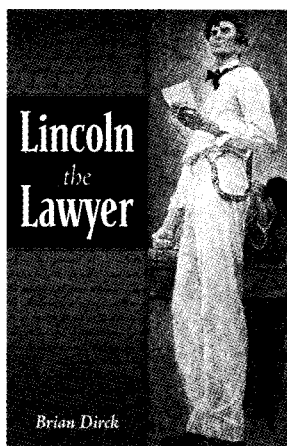
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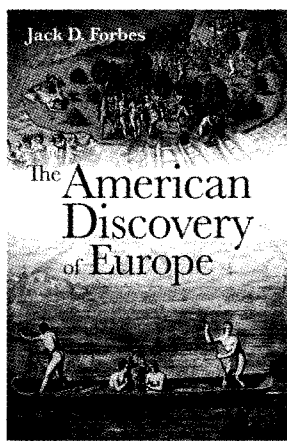
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described the time before the sexual dam was breached:

Up till then there'd only been
A sort of bargaining,
A wrangle for a ring,
A shame that started at sixteen
And spread to everything.

We must therefore imagine a time when marriage was, rather than a genial mutual agreement to give up serial monogamy, an actual license to have sex. That this made the initiation of matrimony a trifle fraught cannot go without saying. It must be said. Larkin's first verse is oft-quoted but usually with the elision of the third line ("Which was rather late for me"). Edward and Florence have not come to the altar too late to take advantage of the emancipation of the libido; they've turned up very slightly *too early*. McEwan's opening sentence is almost deliberately awkward:

They were young, educated, and both virgins on this, their wedding night, and they lived in a time when a conversation about sexual difficulties was plainly impossible.

He presumably does not mean to say that the couple were both young and educated on their nuptial night: The slight clumsiness makes a good beginning by provoking a faint embarrassment in the reader. How grim is this going to be? To say that the post-wedding and pre-defloration *diner intime à deux* is unpromising is to say the least of it:

This was not a good moment in the history of English cuisine, but no one much minded at the time, except visitors from abroad. The formal meal began, as so many did then, with a slice of melon decorated by a single glazed cherry. Out in the corridor, in silver dishes on candle-heated plate warmers, waited slices of long-ago roasted beef in a thickened gravy, soft-boiled vegetables, and potatoes of a bluish hue. The wine was from France, though no particular region was mentioned on the label, which was embellished with a solitary darting swallow. It would not have crossed Edward's mind to have ordered a red.

In a few strokes, McEwan has also summoned the full gruesomeness of the English seaside "holiday," at a period when cheap vacations in the Mediterranean were not commonplace and when the pulling of a cork was an art known to few waiters. On the other hand, and perhaps to be fair, *Chesil Beach* is one of the natural wonders of the English southern coast, with a layering of ancient shingle that shows in its patterns the action of the channel tides. (The late John Fowles wrote well about this part of the country, which borders also on Thomas Hardy's territory.) All being well, the young couple plan a romantic walk along this imposing reach of polished pebbles. But first there's an even more natural strait to be negotiated.

Convention used to portray the ardent groom and the blushful but receptive bride. Edward lives up to the first billing, but Florence is a bit more than blushful; she is, to be precise, frigid and hysterical. It's not even a matter of closing her eyes and thinking of England; the very thought of penetration alarms and repels her. At intervals, McEwan sketches the backstory of each. We learn that Edward's mother was brain-damaged and irresponsible, and we are allowed to surmise that Florence once had a nasty encounter of some sort with her father's roguish masculinity. We don't quite have to ask why Edward has put up with so much reserve from his fiancée for so long, because he's shown as impatiently determined to make a woman of her and a man of himself.

Of the protracted scene that makes a mockery of both ambitions, I will spare you an account. Only Larkin himself ever put it more bleakly—by complaining that the mechanics of the conjugal act seemed to have been designed by the army, or the Ministry of Food. No bungle, fumble, miscue, or calamity is omitted. In *The Child in Time*, McEwan showed his main character in a sort of time warp, suddenly aware that he was watching his courting parents and indirectly witnessing his own procreation.

Nothing germinal could result from the awful moment depicted here. There isn't even anything for either party to laugh at, no saving element of farce or fiasco. After an exquisitely painful exchange of words on the beach where Florence has run—both parties are depicted as relishing the saying of things that cannot possibly be unsaid—the curtain falls on the marriage, and it's plain that the two will never be able to meet, or to speak, again.

**ON CHESIL BEACH:
A Novel**

by Ian McEwan
Doubleday

Exploring the might-have-beens, McEwan expresses the difference between the pair in quasi-musical terms. Florence is a classically trained violinist and devotes the remainder of her life to a rather spinsterish role in a string quartet. Edward is swept away by the nascent rock-music revolution and loses himself in managing outdoor concerts and record shops, in a culture that rapidly makes the Beatles appear tame. Along with this life comes the sexual release that was denied him for so long:

By then, in the late sixties, he was living in London. Who would have predicted such transformations—the sudden guiltless elevation of sensual pleasure, the uncomplicated willingness of so many beautiful women? Edward wandered through those brief years like a confused and happy child reprieved from a prolonged punishment, not quite able to believe his luck.

But it is not McEwan's habit to narrate in a straight line, and the blissed-out Edward sometimes ponders what his wretched one-night wife might have meant or intended when she stood desperate on the shingle and offered him the right to take other women if he would agree to the outward forms of marriage and companionship.

Very well: In what sense other than the Larkinesque does this brief fiction express anything "national"? There is, first, that even more awkwardly English question of class. Florence's family is richer than Edward's and has paid for the wedding and much besides, and at the

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It is fair to say that when the United States invaded Iraq, most Army officers knew more about the U.S. Civil War than they did about counterinsurgency. This volume was written to fill that void. An introduction by Sarah Sewall, director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, places the manual in critical and historical perspective, explaining the significance and potential impact of this revolutionary challenge to conventional U.S. military doctrine.

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AN57

critical moment she's not above reminding him of this. Nothing in England can ever quite be separated from the inescapable question of one's "background," and in the early '60s the codes of stratification were still quite intact. There is, then, and as aforementioned, the sense of a "deep England" that will outlast this transient sexual disaster. Indeed, the physical landscape is in some ways what helped bring the ill-matched couple together and hold them close. In describing their less-trammeled courtship, McEwan summons the folds and villages of the Thames Valley around Oxfordshire, and there's no need to claim acquaintance with this

of history, who until the defeat on Chesil Beach has considered a certain sturdy optimism as his birthright:

In three short years he studied wars, rebellions, famines, pestilences, the rise and collapse of empires, revolutions that consumed their children, agricultural hardship, industrial squalor, the cruelty of ruling elites—a colorful pageant of oppression, misery and failed hopes. He understood how constrained and meager lives could be, generation after generation. In the grand view of things, these peaceful, prosperous times England was experiencing now were rare, and within them his and Florence's joy was exceptional, even unique.

Only Philip Larkin has ever decried sex more bleakly than McEwan does here. No fumble, miscue, or calamity is omitted.

territory (as I can) to feel its strong pull. Not since George Orwell re-created the lost atmosphere of Lower Binfield in *Coming Up for Air* have I read anything as good on that particular blend of meandering waters, undulant low-lying hills, slow-moving days, trudging plough horses, towpaths, sultry heat, and isolated hamlets and churches. Orwell composed that novel of aching remembrance in torrid Morocco, so I make no apology for saying that McEwan put me in mind, twice, of John Keats as he gazed on the work of ancient Attica: "Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness / Thou foster-child of silence and slow time."

Here indeed is the unravished bride, and the reticence and the very tentative unfolding; here also the bold lover of whom it must be said "never, never canst thou kiss, though winning near the goal" and the "heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd / A burning forehead and a parching tongue." For Edward, much time is lost in bitterly recalling the frozen attitude of the loth maiden and replaying the moment of desolate frustration.

Descending somewhat from the pathos of the sublime, McEwan portrays Edward as a hardheaded student

Impressed by the "great man" theory of history, Edward has to wait until he is stout and 60 to appreciate that there was no imperative need to rush things that night, that his own unique opportunity to take command of events was once and irretrievably lost, and that

as she ran away from him, certain in her distress that she was about to lose him, she had never loved him more, or more hopelessly, and that the sound of his voice would have been a deliverance, and she would have turned back.

To conclude with Larkin's dry, sarcastic summary of the case:

Then all at once the quarrel sank:
Everyone felt the same,
And every life became
A brilliant breaking of the bank,
A quite unlosable game.

McEwan, a '60s child if ever there was one, comes to remind us that there were losers, all right, and that there still are. It would be less interesting to term this a generational achievement than a national one. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is an *Atlantic* contributing editor and a *Vanity Fair* columnist.

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COVER to COVER

HISTORY



**The Berlin Wall:
A World Divided, 1961–1989**

by Frederick Taylor (HarperCollins)

For something that lasted only slightly more than a quarter century, the Berlin Wall cast a very long shadow. Built almost overnight by desperate Soviet authorities determined to keep East Berlin's population from hemorrhaging to the free sectors of the city, the Wall did its job with brutal, stifling effect. This vivid account of the Wall and all that it meant reminds us that symbolism can be double-edged, as a potent emblem of isolation and repression became, in its destruction, an even more powerful totem of freedom.

**Forgotten Wars: Freedom
and Revolution in Southeast Asia**

by Christopher Bayly
and Tim Harper (Harvard)

Two years after their brilliant and vivid *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941–45*, the Cambridge historians Bayly and Harper produce a sequel that examines Britain's conflicts in Southeast Asia in the four years after the Second World War. While adroitly analyzing Britain's hard-fought battle against insurrectionary forces in Malaya, the authors explore lesser-known episodes: Bengalese and Burmese skirmishes seldom highlighted in accounts of the Raj's end, and the British interregnums between the ends of the Japanese occupations of Indonesia and Vietnam and the restorations of the respective former colonial administrations.

BIOGRAPHY and MEMOIR



The Last Mrs. Astor

by Frances Kiernan (Norton)

At the end of the 19th century, the then-Mrs. Astor was known for setting the parameters of New York society by

the number of people who could fit into her ballroom. It is a measure of high society's progress since those days that the current (and final) undisputed holder of the title has made her mark through intelligent philanthropy and discriminating patronage of the arts. Recently in the news because of an unseemly tussle between her son and grandson over her guardianship, the 105-year-old Brooke Astor deserves to be remembered for what she actually accomplished, and this sympathetic telling of her story should counterbalance all that gossipy sensationalism.

Fallen Founder: The Life of Aaron Burr
by Nancy Isenberg (Viking)

National memory is inevitably drawn to melodrama, and Burr has historically been cast in the role of black sheep in the Founding Family. But Isenberg argues, with elegance and meticulous research, that the principled, adroit Burr shouldn't be the fall guy in our early national narrative. On some issues, particularly those later espoused by feminists, he was far ahead of his time, and his political conduct was "no better, no worse" than that of his contemporaries Jefferson and Hamilton. In fact, in her assessment of Jefferson's and Hamilton's treatment of Burr, Isenberg reveals an unsettling truth: "Politics, then as now, causes 'great' men to speak irrationally and act deviously."

George Kennan: A Study of Character
by John Lukacs (Yale)

The dean of the realist school of foreign policy wouldn't seem to be a natural biographical subject for so passionate an opponent of totalitarianism as Lukacs. But mostly the author focuses on Kennan as the great American figure of his age: a sterling character and true font of wisdom, a man whose actual views were far more complex and nuanced than the gross public perception (based on his

espoused policy to simply contain the Soviet Union). This beautiful little book is suffused with the love and respect that Lukacs has for his subject, whom he knew and revered as that rare breed: the foreign-policy expert who becomes a true statesman.

**Aimee Semple McPherson and
the Resurrection of Christian America**
by Matthew Avery Sutton (Harvard)

This biography of McPherson explores how the evangelist combined old-time religion with newfangled technology to build a multimedia soul-saving juggernaut in 1920s Los Angeles. Even if Sutton's efforts to connect McPherson to today's evangelical resurgence are sketchy and unconvincing, his book (particularly in its analysis of the media coverage surrounding McPherson's 1926 "kidnapping"—likely staged in an attempt to obscure an illicit affair) is a thorough and absorbing portrait of a wholly original figure.

SOCIETY and CULTURE



**Esalen: America and
the Religion of No Religion**

by Jeffrey J. Kripal (Chicago)

Mysticism and empiricism, East and West, enlightenment and ... golf? Esalen—equally a phenomenon and an institute—sought to amalgamate these things and more into a "human potential movement," a unified utopia "creatively suspended between the revelations of the religions and the democratic, pluralistic, and scientific revolutions of modernity." And for a time it did, resolving many of its inherent paradoxes to achieve something unique (and uniquely American) in its eclectic egalitarianism. Co-founded by former Stanford classmates Michael Murphy and Richard Price, Esalen had as its set and setting 1960s California



(a sui generis time and place if ever there was one). During its heyday, it drew counterculture notables—Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Leary spent time there; so did Maslow, Huxley, and Campbell—and notoriety (the term *touchy-feely* sprang forth, fully formed) in equal measure. It eventually lost its vitality, but not before giving rise to the New Age movement that persists today (as does the institute itself, albeit in neutered form).

Kripal, a religious-studies professor at Rice University, examines Esalen's extraordinary history and evocatively describes the breech birth of Murphy and Price's brainchild. His real achievement, though, is effortlessly synthesizing a dizzying array of dissonant phenomena (Cold War espionage, ecstatic religiosity), incongruous pairings (Darwinism, Tantric sex), and otherwise schizy ephemera (psychedelic drugs, spaceflight) into a cogent, satisfyingly complete narrative. That he reconciles all this while barely batting an eye is remarkable; that he does so while writing with such élan is nothing short of wondrous. This essential volume achieves what Esalen itself ultimately couldn't sustain: a true gestalt.

**Museum: Behind the Scenes
at the Metropolitan Museum of Art**
by Danny Danziger (Viking)

The genius of Danziger is to get to the heart of an institution through myriad personal interviews. From his second book, *All in a Day's Work*, with snapshots of 50 people's jobs, to the revealing *Eton Voices*, which exposed the mystique of Britain's premier upper-crust school through interviews with Old Etonians, and now to New York's Metropolitan Museum, Danziger is a master of the pointillist portrait. Here he runs the gamut of subjects, from cleaner and waitress through curator, trustee, and CEO, to show how this cultural behemoth functions.

The Decoration of Houses
by Edith Wharton
and Ogden Codman Jr. (Rizzoli)

This handsome reprint of Wharton's first book (1897) might well be subtitled "Feng Shui for the Gilded Age." For Wharton and Codman, house decoration should not be mere "superficial application of ornament" but rather an organic activity guided by the principles

of simplicity and common sense. The architectural historian Richard Guy Wilson has written a brisk and informative new foreword.

Where's My Jetpack?

by Daniel H. Wilson (Bloomsbury)

A leading (if not the only) comic roboticist checks up on the progress of such once-promised technological innovations as the flying car, the death ray, and the ever-elusive meal in pill form. Although some of the most ambitious inventions Wilson discusses do in fact exist (including the jetpack, hampered only by extremely expensive fuel and the small matter that what goes up must somehow come down), a larger number do not, which movingly reflects inventors' optimism about the eternal future—as well as the public's even-keeled acceptance of the fact that the future often turns out to be distressingly similar to what immediately preceded it.

FICTION

Divisadero

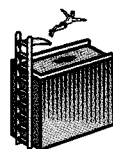
by Michael Ondaatje (Knopf)

In this structurally disjointed but thematically cohesive tale divided between Northern California in the 1970s and France in the early 1900s, Ondaatje explores the tenacity of youthful experiences and relationships in the face of life's radical forks. Emotionally enthralling and lushly envisioned, this novel, like *The English Patient* and *Anil's Ghost*, demonstrates Ondaatje's rare talent for imposing satisfyingly clear ideas on realistically ambiguous lives.

My Holocaust

by Tova Reich (HarperCollins)

In this merciless satire on the American glorification and commodification of victimhood (the first chapter of which appeared in this magazine), every group vies for the distinction of having suffered the most. As one of the characters (the president of Holocaust Connections Inc.; slogan: "Make Your Cause a Holocaust") observes, "Everyone wants a piece of the Holocaust pie." Reich, whose husband once was the director of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, writes with intense authority and relentless humor, so that this bitter poison goes down like sweet butter.



**"I cherish this book
for its quite naked
honesty and
quiet lyricism."**

—Jim Harrison,
author of *Legends of the Fall*



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—Ted Kooser,
U.S. Poet Laureate, 2004-2006



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TRAVELS

Laid-back and beautiful, Kunming is China's "City of Eternal Spring."

South of the Clouds

BY JEFFREY TAYLER

In 1274, Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan and the founder of China's Mongol Yuan Dynasty, chose Kunming (known then as Yachi) as the capital of a newly annexed territory deep in the mountains at his empire's southernmost edge. Marco Polo, his eulogizer, visited the town soon after, piquantly noting that its population of

native idolaters, Nestorian Christians, and Saracens or Mahometans ... do not consider it an injury done to them when others have connexion with their wives, provided the act be voluntary on the woman's part.

Then as now, Kunming was a potpourri of ethnic and cultural flavors unfamiliar to Western and Han Chinese palates alike. Its climate compares so favorably to the rest of the country's that the rulers in Beijing, 1,300 miles to the northeast, named the province Yunnan—"South of the Clouds." Because of the city's remoteness, they exiled political enemies there, a practice that persisted well into the 20th century.

During a recent visit to Kunming, I found little that recalled this tragic past. A sun-blessed city 6,200 feet above sea level, situated among lakes and terraced tea and tobacco fields, it struck me, a longtime aficionado of the country's north, as being just what the rest of China seems to lack: a clean, totally relaxed, and entirely agreeable metropolis where one can kick back and enjoy life. Kunming's altitude and latitude ensure moderate temperatures year-round; it has none of the killer heat and humidity of, say, Hong Kong, or the sandstorms and icy winds of Beijing. In the city center, pastel-hued skyscrapers reach into an often-cloudless sky; traffic moves at a humane pace along an orderly



SHILIN, or the "Stone Forest," in Yunnan province

grid of six-lane thoroughfares, complete with bike lanes and pedestrian overpasses; magnolias and firs shade parks and side streets. The sidewalks are kept litter-free by on-the-spot fines, and I saw fewer panhandlers than in downtown Washington, D.C. The soft light and fresh breezes had me frequently closing my eyes and thinking of the Mediterranean.

Many of the Chinese banished to Kunming during the Cultural Revolution

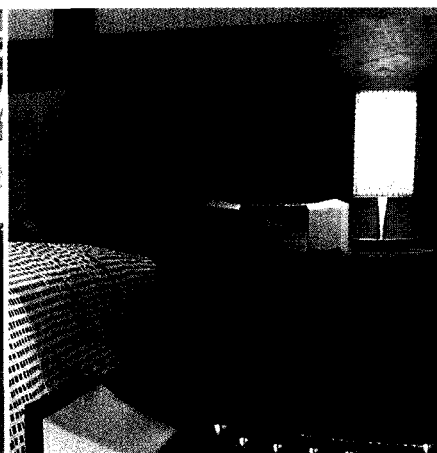
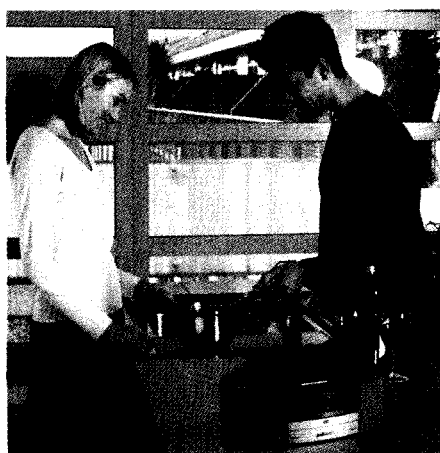
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For an author-narrated slideshow of Kunming, visit www.theatlantic.com/kunming.

became enamored of the area, and after their "rehabilitation" they refused to return home. They'd concluded that Kunming, popularly known as the "City of Eternal Spring," was different from the rest of the country, in both a soothing and a soul-stirring way.

JEFFREY TAYLER

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THE TRAVEL ADVISORY

Getting by

English speakers are rare in Kunming, so it's a good idea to bring a Mandarin phrase book. A guidebook that includes the pinyin renditions of (and Chinese characters for) hotel, restaurant, and place names in and around the city will also prove useful, especially because the Chinese tend to alter proper nouns. (The French Café, for instance, becomes Lan Bai Hong—"blue, white, red," for the Gallic tricolor.) *The Rough Guide to China* is my favorite.

Where to stay

Book rooms ahead of time if you're arriving during the summer. It pays to bargain: Posted rates are often only a starting point. Kunming's most luxurious hotel is the **Green Lake** (Cuihu Binguan, 6 Cuihu Nan Lu, www.greenlakehotel.com), whose park-side location adds to its charm. The centrally located **Kunming Hotel** (Kunming Fandian, 52 Dongfeng Dong Lu, www.kunminghotel.com.cn) offers slightly downscale accommodations for much less. Kunming's old budget standby is the **Camellia Hotel** (Chahua Binguan, 96 Dongfeng Dong Lu, www.kmcamellia-hotel.com); a travel agency in the lobby can arrange guides and tours.

Where to eat

The temple-style **Yunnan Renjia Restaurant** (146 Bao Hai Lu) serves all sorts of Yunnanese specialties and has "minority" dance shows. The **Yunnan Flavor Restaurant** (96 Dongfeng Dong Lu), in the cul-de-sac by the Camellia Hotel, also has minority dance performances, as well as some of the spiciest cabbage-and-mushroom dishes ever to set a palate aflame. Memorable dining experiences can also be had in the area around the Jingxing Bird and Flower

Market, near the Yunnan Provincial Museum: For a couple of dollars you can eat your fill, and you'll probably be the only tourist around.

Still, the city's progressive spirit seems to reside in the Western-style cafés near the university. **Salvador's Coffee House** (76 Wenhua Xiang, Wenlin Jie), with its Californian interior and low-key New Age feel, may become your home away from home. Just around the corner is the **French Café** (Lan Bai Hong, 70 Wenlin Jie), where you can surf the Net for free as you sip your wine or coffee.

What to do

The **Yunnan Provincial Museum** (Yunnan Sheng Bowuguan, on Dongfeng Xi Lu) has a rich display of bronze artifacts from the Dian era (400–109 B.C.). The exhibits are well presented, and most have English translations. Much less well-kept, and much more confusing, is the **Kunming City Museum** (Kunming Shi Bowuguan, Tuodong Lu); still, stop by the second-floor souvenir stands, where bargains abound.

The **Bamboo Temple** (Qiongzhu Si), seven miles west of the city, is easily reached by taxi or bus. Also visit the **Yuantong Temple** (Yuantong Si), in northern Kunming. Like most Buddhist temples, these are cheerful, relaxing places; you can bring a book and read, if you like. The **Jingxing Bird and Flower Market** (Jingxing Huaniao Shichang, off Jingxing Jie in the city center) can occupy an afternoon and may yield treasures—according to a placard I saw at the Yunnan Provincial Museum, archaeologists visiting the market in 1955 stumbled upon Dian-era artifacts that led to the discovery of tombs nearby. Some of Kunming's last old homes stand in the market's midst.

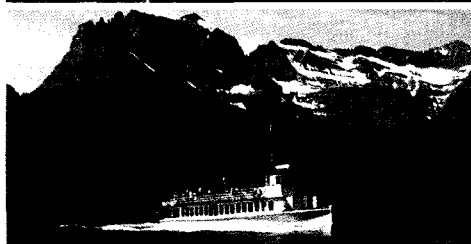
The difference stems partly from Yunnan's relatively late incorporation into China. In ancient times, rugged trade routes crisscrossed the province—which borders Burma, Laos, and Vietnam—linking it more closely to the Tibetan plateau and Southeast Asia than to Beijing. Although emperors of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) settled the region with furloughed Han soldiers, indigenous peoples still account for a quarter of the population.

Not that I would have guessed this from looking about in Kunming, where minorities make up about 6 percent of the population: It's rare to spot anyone in what English-speaking Chinese call "minority costume"—colorful headdresses, beaded and embroidered blouses, baggy pants, and brocaded sashes. The condescension implied in the term is real: Many of China's ethnic minorities complain of discrimination, and in the cities, Western and Chinese dress and culture are viewed as marks of progress; minority costumes, and customs, are found only in isolated communities.

I arranged to visit one such community, and at the same time to take in Yunnan's main geological attraction: Shilin, or the "Stone Forest," a massive karst 55 miles southeast of Kunming. My guide was Liu Ying, a stylishly dressed 25-year-old. Ying told me that she was not Han but Yi—the largest of the 26 minority groups in the province. She went on to say that she was a Communist and added, without irony, that one of her passions was shopping in Hong Kong.

A 90-minute drive through the mountains brought us to Qi Xing Cun, a village of tobacco farmers belonging predominantly to the Sani, a subgroup of the Yi. We set out on foot and soon found ourselves climbing up and down stone walkways lined with clay houses, the doors of which sported posters of glowering medieval Han warriors—*men shen*, or "gate-guarding deities," who are supposed to frighten evil spirits away.

Sani women in traditional dress went about their chores, lugging pails of water or bundles of firewood; the few men around wore threadbare jackets and



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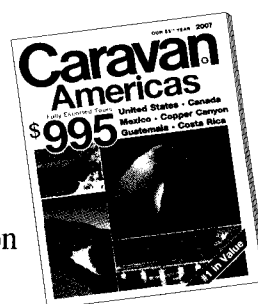
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trousers and squatted in small groups, chatting and smoking cigarettes through Yunnanese water pipes, bulky affairs of bamboo or tin that resemble cast-away bits of primitive plumbing. “You find almost only women in our villages,” Ying told me. “Most young men leave to work in the cities.” They dress in Western clothing, she said, in order to blend in.

We were soon back in the car and on our way to Shilin. Yunnan is dotted with karsts, but Shilin is the most spectacular—a limestone statuary of some 75,000 acres, carved 270 million years ago by a retreating sea. I wrongly expected a contemplative visit. We bought tickets and set off on foot down a paved trail, surrounded by Han sightseers.

As we walked, Ying translated the labels attached to the most prominent boulders. The “hanging rock”—a coffin-sized chunk suspended between two ridges—could, legend has it, fall at any minute, and to prove his love for a girl, a boy should stand beneath it for as long as he dares. A teenager behind us did just that, while his girlfriend giggled. The “Better to Rest Here a While” cove was self-explanatory (benches had been provided); when slapped, the “musical rock” hummed like a zither. At Shilin’s center, we came upon the “heart rock,” a shiny, venous stone shaped like a human heart, which is said to protect those who caress it from cardiac troubles.

Yunnan’s cuisine, I had read, is renowned for its variety, even in a country of astonishing culinary diversity. I hadn’t realized quite what this meant. Back by the ticket booths, Ying and I sat down at a Sani restaurant—a scattering of plastic tables and chairs beneath a droopy tarp. The proprietress pulled me over to a display case containing delicacies that looked to be straight out of an entomologist’s textbook.

“Bee baby! Eat bee baby!” she urged, shoving a saucer of yellow-brown larvae toward me. “No? Then eat bamboo bug!” She wielded a plate of fleshy white grubs the size of pinkies. I passed and, on Ying’s advice, ordered sliced, toasted goat’s cheese, smoky ham, pork sautéed with mushrooms, and *guoqiao*

mixian, or “crossing-the-bridge noodles”—pencil-thick, foot-long white spaghetti. As it turned out, the mushrooms and cheese still allowed me to boast of having expanded my cultural horizons: Rare elsewhere in China, they are, Ying said, as authentically Yunnanese as the grubs.



Introduced by wandering monks and traders, Buddhism entered China sometime during the first century A.D. It soon gained a following among Chinese drawn to its ideal of enlightenment for all sentient beings. A few miles northwest of Kunming, hunkered on the slope of Yu’an Shan (“Jade Table Mountain”), is Qiongzhu Si, the Bamboo Temple. With its hulking walls, Qiongzhu Si looks more like a barbarian fortress than what it is: a lighthearted, even irreverent, shrine.

I arrived at the temple at noon one day and found the courtyard awash in sunlight. Monks laughed and horsed around. Worshippers lit incense sticks, held them to their foreheads, and bowed energetically in all four directions. Other visitors knelt by the main hall. Lit only

by candles, three huge gilt statues of the Buddha glinted in the darkness within.

I stepped up to the rope cordoning off the hall from the courtyard and focused on the walls on either side of the Buddhas. There, surfing sculpted waves, were the surreal characters for which the temple is known: an imperious duke astride a flying rooster, a masked buffoon atop a lion, devils mounted on dragons, and a multitude of other playful statues, all commissioned from the famous 19th-century Sichuanese sculptor Li Guangxiu and modeled after *arhats*, or monks who’ve attained nirvana. It took Li more than seven years to complete the collection, which comprises 500 figures, each depicting an aspect of human experience.

My guidebook told me the ritual prescribed by legend: You start counting the *arhats*, and the one whose number corresponds to your age reveals your inner character. No flattering symbolism for me: My *arhat* was a bare-chested, bug-eyed ruffian.

Li’s creations at Qiongzhu Si offended his contemporaries, effectively ending his career. Yet through the figures, he’d succeeded in expressing a key Buddhist tenet: The world is not to be taken too seriously, and there are always reasons for laughter.

On one of my last evenings in town, Ying and I headed to the café district, near the university. Chinese and Western students thronged one bar after another, many with New Age decor and trendy Western names. We chose a sidewalk table at the French Café. Over a bottle of Yunnan red wine and some roasted cashews, Ying told me about her life—her new apartment, her ailing mother, her unhurried search for a husband.

“What does being a Communist mean to you?” I asked.

“Joining the party was a way to advance my career and be a part of an elite,” she said. “I was once very ambitious. But now I just want to enjoy my life. In Kunming I can do just that.”

The laughter at surrounding tables seemed to suggest that she was right. ▀

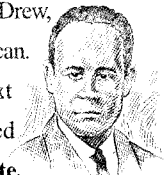
Jeffrey Tayler is an Atlantic correspondent. His most recent book is *River of No Reprieve* (2006).

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CULTURE AND COMMERCE

George Hurrell's brilliantly orchestrated photographs helped define Hollywood glamour in the 1930s.

Starlight and Shadow

BY VIRGINIA POSTREL

George Hurrell (1904–1992) was one of the most important American photographers of the 1930s, but you won't find his work in many history books. He didn't record the Great Depression or the Dust Bowl, celebrate Hitler or Stalin, or turn machines and buildings into powerful abstractions. Hurrell made commercial portraits of movie stars. Between 1930, when he became the primary portrait photographer at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and 1942, when he was drafted to take photos for the Army, he developed the lighting techniques and visual vocabulary that gave Hollywood stars their special aura of grace, mystery, and perfection. He was the master of Hollywood glamour.

Until recently, his subjects' celebrity overshadowed his art; even collectors generally paid more attention to Hurrell's subjects than to his techniques. "If you had a photograph by Hurrell, it wasn't because you thought it was great art but because it was the best photograph you'd seen of that star. It was more fan-based collecting," says the Hurrell collector Louis F. D'Elia, a Pasadena neuropsychologist and an exception to the rule.

With memories of the era's stars fading, however, museums and art collectors have begun to recognize the photographs' aesthetic value. It's the difference between revering a Madonna and Child as a devotional object and appreciating the artist's use of perspective or sfumato.

"You concentrate less on 'That's Clark Gable' or 'That's Greta Garbo,' and you focus more on the lighting, the retouching, the extreme detail, the way the eyelashes are drawn in," says Virginia Heckert, an associate curator of photography at the Getty Museum.

One result of this new appreciation: much higher prices. In February, a vintage 10-by-13 photo of Norma Shearer sold for \$4,094 on eBay, and one of Myrna Loy went for \$6,768. Two years earlier, "you could pick some of these up for \$500 or \$550," says D'Elia, who bought his first Hurrell—an elegant 1930 portrait of silent-era star Dorothy Jordan—as a teenager in 1967, bargaining the seller down from \$8 to \$5.

Hurrell sculpted his subjects' faces with light and shadow, using an easily movable boom light that he modeled on a boom microphone, to illuminate cheekbones and create shadows under the eyes and nose. "The most essential thing about my style was working with

shadows to design the face instead of flooding it with light," he said.

Hurrell never intended to invent a new photographic idiom, or even to go to Hollywood. He dreamed of being a painter, and in 1925, shortly before his 21st birthday, he moved from Chicago to California, where he settled in the seaside artists' colony of Laguna Beach. He soon found photography a more reliable source of income than painting, and began taking pictures of local artists, socialites, and other visitors, eventually opening a studio in Los Angeles. "I became a photographer because I had to make a living," he explained. Hurrell had no qualms about mixing art and commerce.

One of his first friends in Southern California was Florence "Pancho" Barnes, a Pasadena heiress and free-spirited early aviator. (She appears in Tom Wolfe's *The Right Stuff*.) She encouraged Hurrell's photography and often posed for him. In the photo for her pilot's license, he had her strike a masculine pose, complete with cigarette and grimy fingernails. The mannish persona was a dig at Orville Wright, who had to approve the license and supposedly didn't care for female pilots. Through Hurrell's lens, Barnes becomes a model of self-contained, modern femininity: She's wearing a man's shirt, but her dreamy eyes, bare throat, tousled bangs, slim fingers, and soft lips reveal her womanly nature. Avoiding the soft focus then in vogue, Hurrell used shadow to shape her face. "I was trying to get character into my work," he later said. "That's why I went sharp."

In early 1929, Barnes's best friend, the silent-film star Ramón Novarro, was worried that his career might not survive the talkies. The Mexican-born actor spoke



PANCHO BARNES (1928)

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English with an accent, and despite his success in hits like *Ben-Hur*, he thought he might be better off pursuing an opera career in Europe. He needed publicity photographs showing him in various roles, but didn't want to tip off the bosses at MGM by using a studio photographer. Playing classical music on his Victrola, Hurrell photographed Novarro in costume, first at his tiny studio and later at Novarro's home and at Barnes's ranch. Compared with Hurrell's later portraits, these soft-focus photographs look like sentimental pictorialism. But Novarro loved them. "You have captured my moods exactly," he told the photographer.

Novarro recommended Hurrell to another MGM star who needed photos done on the sly. Norma Shearer, one of the studio's most popular stars, wanted the title role in *The Divorcée*, but her own husband, MGM production chief Irving Thalberg, thought she wasn't sexy enough for the part—she had been typecast as a dignified lady. She hired Hurrell to prove otherwise. Playing jazz records and singing along as his wind-up gramophone slowed to a growl, Hurrell mussed her well-coiffed hair and made her show some shoulder and leg. Amused by his bad singing, she began to have fun playing the temptress. In the photos, Shearer looks the sophisticated seductress, completely at ease and enjoying herself. She got the *Divorcée* part—and won an Oscar for the role. And Hurrell, on the recommendation of the "queen of the lot," got a job shooting publicity portraits at MGM.

Such photos were a major element in the studio's star-making process, establishing and updating actors' public identities and promoting them between films. Studio publicity departments placed these photos in magazines and sent copies in reply to fan mail. Even more than the movies themselves, the stills depicted a grace that could transcend age and time. The goal was not to humanize stars but to elevate them: These were not down-to-earth pals but idealized screen gods and goddesses.

Yet these photos weren't entirely artificial. Not even the most gifted photographer can create charisma with only lights



NORMA SHEARER (1929)



JOAN CRAWFORD (1932), above, and Ramón Novarro (1929), at left

and a retouching pencil. Hurrell didn't invent Joan Crawford's drive or Jean Harlow's sexuality. Rather, he encouraged the stars to reveal their inner selves to his lens. Then he intensified their defining qualities, while creating mystery with light and shadow.

Crawford, who was just 26 when Hurrell first photographed her, became his most frequent subject. A famous clothes-horse, she often posed in Adrian's trend-setting costume designs, but Hurrell's most striking portraits of her downplay her outfits, focusing on her intense eyes

and determined mouth. In their first meeting, she tried to stick to her practiced poses. Hurrell preferred to have his subjects relax and move more spontaneously, allowing him to add the photo's artifice. (From his heavily retouched photos, you would never know that Crawford's face was covered with freckles.) Crawford and Hurrell argued throughout the shoot, but the proofs persuaded her to trust him. Even after he left MGM in 1932 to work independently, she continued to use him. He consistently made her look like a sophisticated, powerful star.

His one session with Greta Garbo did not go as well. To shoot promotional photos for *Romance*, she came laden with heavy 19th-century costumes of velvet and fur, her hair done in period ringlets. And she already had her poses in mind. Hurrell played the cutup, dancing around the studio. He wanted the "real," lighthearted Garbo. But the star refused to lift the veil that had created her glamour. As the session went on, she became stiffer and stiffer, while Hurrell acted sillier and sillier. Finally, he accidentally tripped, she cracked a spontaneous smile, and he hit the shutter. The shot was only a temporary triumph, though: Garbo never used that "crazy man" again, relying instead on MGM's Clarence Bull.

Jean Harlow, by contrast, was Hurrell's most malleable subject. Just 21 when MGM bought her contract from Howard Hughes in 1932, the platinum blonde had a straightforward appeal: Harlow was overtly sexual. In a 1933 shot whose composition works from any angle, Harlow lies on her back, with her hair spread above her head. She clutches her hair with her right hand and drapes the back of her left hand against the side of her head. Her face is shiny and flushed. This is, the photo suggests, either a postcoital moment or the contemplation of one.

To Harlow's obvious sex appeal, Hurrell added mystery. In 1932, he shot her in a soft, oversized coat, making her look small and playing up her childlike vulnerability—while letting the viewer imagine that she had nothing on underneath. In an iconic 1935 shot, he used

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JEAN HARLOW (1935)





GRACE JONES and
Dolph Lundgren (1985)



MYRNA LOY (1932)

complex light and shadow to add depth to her hair and sharpen her soft features, giving her a stronger character and more rarefied sexuality than in her less-stylized portraits. Here, the down-to-earth good-time girl becomes a screen goddess, an “angel trapped on earth,” in the words of D’Elia.

After World War II, the studio system broke down, and screen deities went out of fashion. Actors were demystified and desexualized; they became “just like us,” only prettier. Technology also changed, as photographers adopted 35-millimeter film and stopped routinely retouching their shots. “When we stopped using those 8-by-10 cameras, the glamour was gone,” said Hurrell, who turned to shooting TV stills and fashion spreads.

He lived to see his distinctive style rediscovered in the 1980s. After the studied wholesomeness of postwar Hollywood and the gritty antiheroes of the Vietnam era, audiences were again ready for honest artifice and larger-than-life

stars. As moviemakers discovered the appeal of sculpted bodies, Hurrell turned bodybuilders like Dolph Lundgren, Grace Jones, and Arnold Schwarzenegger into new icons, helping to redefine contemporary glamour.

Hurrell considered glamour an illusion intrinsic to photography. “All of us glamorize everything, including the [documentary photographers] who glamorize filth and squalor,” he said. “Even [Hurrell’s friend, the noted photographer Edward] Weston does it, taking a picture of a gnarled tree trunk. It’s a question of emphasizing ... the dirt or the beauty.”

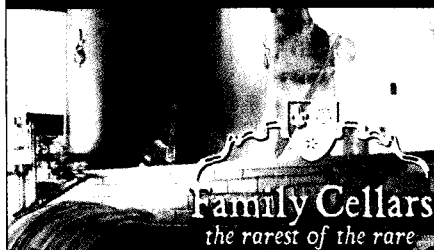
Hurrell’s work emphasized beauty. And it celebrated the human face. Now that we’ve largely forgotten the personas those faces represented, we can more fully appreciate the photographer’s art. ■

Virginia Postrel is an *Atlantic* contributing editor. This article is adapted from her catalog essay for “Lights! Camera! Glamour!,” an exhibition of George Hurrell’s photographs, curated by Louis F. D’Elia, which travels to the California Heritage Museum in Santa Monica in January 2008. She is writing a book on glamour.

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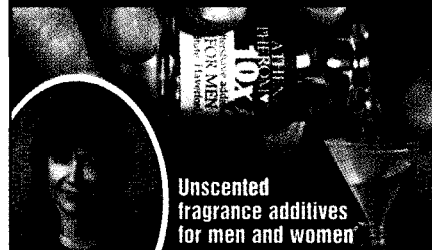
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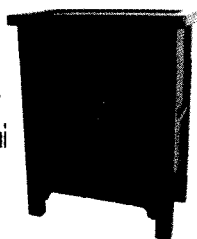
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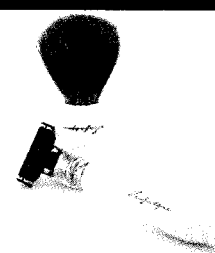
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FOOD

Will Cannery Row's signature fish transcend its humble reputation to become a chef's staple? It should.

The Rise of the Sardine

BY CORBY KUMMER

In January a tuna-obsessed party of I cooks, teachers, and bon vivants got on a bus at dawn in a San Diego parking lot and headed south across the Mexican border and down the hilly, dramatic coast of Baja California to the thriving port city of Ensenada, where the groggy group (many of them assembled by Sam Popkin, a food-loving professor of political science at the University of California, San Diego) transferred to a chartered boat that motored for more than an hour into the Pacific. It slowed, and conversation quickened, when it came to its destination: several net-enclosed pens the size of backyard swimming pools, in the open sea, surrounded by small boats whose crews were preparing for an incomparably colorful and bloody spectacle—the slaughter of bluefin tuna to be air-freighted to the daily Tokyo fish auction.

Tuna have not yet been raised commercially from egg to maturity, and so underwater feedlots—analogueous to the beef industry's enormous holding areas for fattening cattle on corn—are an excellent way to bring bluefins to the peak of perfection for the exigent and profitable Japanese market, which pays a premium for sushi-grade fish.

Conversation stopped as the first majestic fish was lifted onto a barge covered with electric-blue tarps. Swarms of men dressed from head to toe in school-bus-yellow rubber held the fish by the gills and killed it with a spike between the eyes. The scene was oddly beautiful in its Matisse colors—the gray-blue of the lordly fish, calmly facing its fate; the brilliant yellow covering the men; the blue of the tarps; and the deep maroon of the thick blood. “Take off your hat when speaking of the dead,” Philippe



THEY'RE BACK: After years of declining population and reputation, sardines are resurgent.

Charat, whose company, Maricultura del Norte, owns the feedlot, said to a member of the party.

I was along not to eat the sushi and sashimi that the other guests would devour the following night at Charat's home, in Rancho Santa Fe, a tony residential colony near San Diego. I wanted to focus instead on the very last thing we saw as we pulled away, to which the rest of the group paid little heed: a silvery stream of iridescent live fish swirling over the pens for the afternoon feeding of the tuna that had, this day, been spared. Shoveled into the water by workers in a small tender beside the pens, the silvery fish were fresh sardines. They are a large part of

why these bluefins fetch such a high price. I had something in common with the tuna: I wanted to eat sardines too.

Sardines have had a surprising and important revival in the Pacific. For decades in the 20th century their abundance gave birth to an industry that fed millions of soldiers fighting both world wars and sustained thousands of Sicilians, Asians, and other foreign-born workers—the fishermen and packers of Cannery Row, in Monterey, California—during the worst years of the Depression. Visitors to the Monterey Bay Aquarium can see photographs and machines from the cannery that originally occupied the

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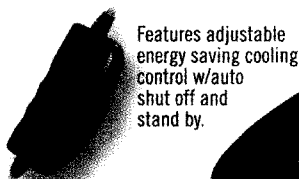


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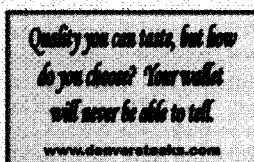
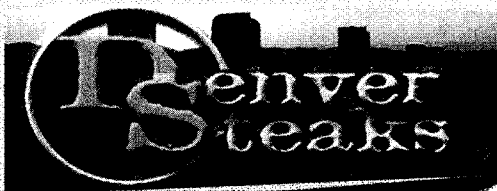
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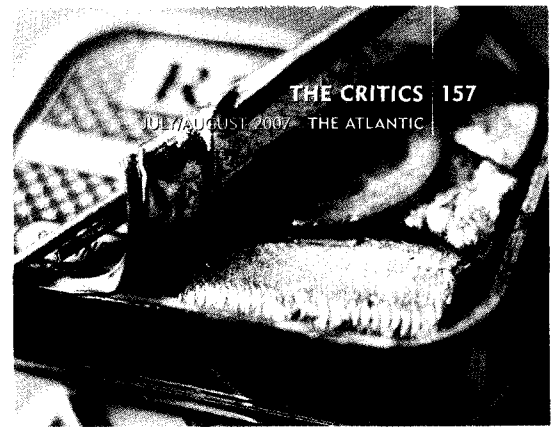
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building, and promotional films from the 1930s and '40s showing the factory life that was the backdrop of John Steinbeck's novel *Cannery Row*. (You can also watch the films at www.mbayaq.org.) The California sardine fishery was the largest in the Western hemisphere, and in its peak season, 1936-37, fishermen took 726,000 tons of sardines.

But even as Steinbeck wrote the novel, which was published in 1945, the sardine population was mysteriously declining, and by the early '50s the industry had collapsed. By the middle of the decade, Cannery Row was practically deserted. The easy explanation was overfishing: In the '30s, "reduction" operations were grinding sardines into meal for animal feed and oil for paint, glue, and industrial purposes. But decades of close study of sardines after the collapse revealed that Cannery Row might have turned into Skid Row even without the voracious reduction plants. For 2,000 years the Pacific coastline had seen roughly 60-year cycles of sardines and anchovies (their cousins), following temperature cycles: Sardines prefer warmer water, anchovies prefer cooler, and their populations fluctuate in similar cycles around the world. After severe restrictions and moratoriums on sardine fishing that lasted from 1967 to 1986, the fish began coming back in numbers that made commercial fishing thinkable again.

But the canneries were gone for good. Pacific sardines caught today are frozen and sent to tuna-fattening farms in the waters off, for example, Australia, which is where Charat (whose Russian-born father went into the fishing business in Mexico after escaping World War II France with his French-born wife) began thinking about starting his own farm. He thought fresh sardines would make tuna taste better than frozen ones did, and he bought boats to catch sardines up and down the Baja peninsula, tendering them to the pens during the tuna-fattening season, which runs from July through March.

Farther north, in Monterey, the sardine season gets under way in late spring, and sardines are at their fattest and best



UNPACKING PACKED SARDINES

Fresh sardines are easier to love, so if canned sardines are to enjoy the revival I think they deserve, they need to be full of distinctive, rich flavor—but not too fishy. Sardines packed in water give the purest taste and are the best choice for salads and in recipes, especially because the oil most packers use is terrible.

Granadoisa, from Morocco and available at www.barneygreengrass.com, is an exception, because even bad olive oil in Morocco is usually pretty good. And these sardines are lush (as all oil-packed fish should be), meaty, and authoritative—a way to convert tuna-lovers.

Season (www.seasonproducts.com) packs fat, smooth, superior sardines free of the chalky texture of many canned sardines.

Beach Cliff sardines (www.beachcliff.info), from Prospect Harbor, Maine, up the coast from its more famous cousin Port Clyde, are actually small herring, the East Coast version of sardines, and wider and meatier (if a bit less finely flavored) than many European and Mediterranean sardines.

Bela-Olhão, from Portugal (www.mybela.com), only come smoked, which I generally avoid (you taste the smoke, not the fish), and in sauces, which I also find generally extraneous attempts to cut the richness with tomato (which Bela-Olhão offers) or mustard or chiles. I include them here because they're well distributed in gourmet shops, packed in good-quality olive oil, and sold in cheery tins besides. They also make an easy and satisfying lunch at the (preferably well-ventilated) office.

in the late summer and fall, according to Paul Johnson, of Berkeley's Monterey Fish Market. Johnson, the author of the new *Fish Forever: The Definitive Guide to Understanding, Selecting, and Preparing Healthy, Delicious, and Environmentally Sustainable Seafood*, has sold many San Francisco chefs on fresh sardines. "They're really coming back strong," he told me recently.

But that doesn't mean that people who got used to canned tuna, which by the 1950s had replaced canned sardines on supermarket shelves and family tables, will welcome them back. The decline of the sardine population was accompanied by a decline in its reputation. In the United States, sardines had

high in omega-3s, come to the fore. According to Steve Webster, senior marine biologist at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, most tuna live about 10 years, and sardines about six, meaning they accumulate fewer toxins—making which waters sardines come from, and the level of toxins, less of a worry. The less time in the water (or the soil, for that matter), the less risky the food: Eating low on the food chain seems a wise strategy.

The best way to rediscover sardines—and overcome residual aversion based on the tins of childhood—is to eat them fresh, just as diners graduated from canned tuna to grilled tuna to tuna tartare. ("It's phenomenal how

I had something in common with the tuna: I wanted to eat sardines too.

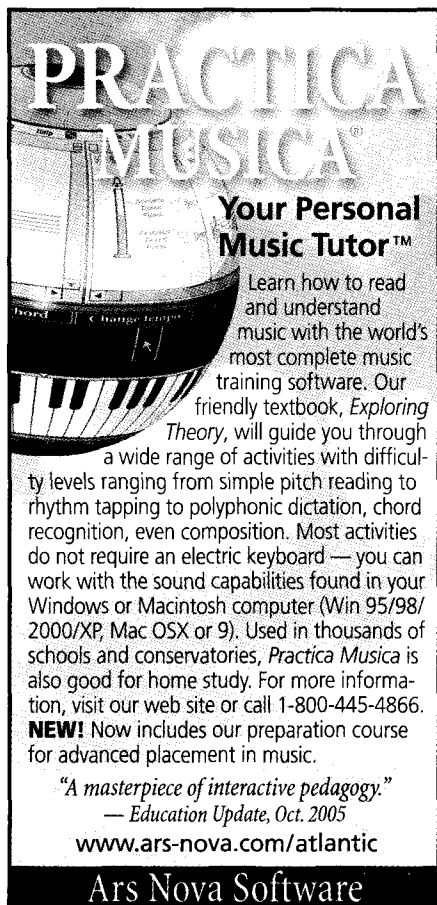
always fought an association with food for the poor—the kind of thing you eat straight from the can in a cold-water flat. Canned tuna became the wholesome food in cans, partly because it had no scary skin and bones.

But to my mind sardines taste better, and they certainly have health benefits like tuna's. And they may be safer to eat. Omega-3s, the fats we are told will help protect us against heart disease, are now the "queen of fats," as a recent book by the science writer Susan Allport calls them. (Linoleic acid, a polyunsaturate in many vegetable oils that has come in and out of dieticians' favor, was the original king.) Allport's book, a brief and absorbing guide to the past few decades of research into dietary fats, contains the obligatory nutritional advice, including, of course, a recommendation that we regularly consume fatty fish, like salmon and mackerel, and lean fish, like cod—though cod stores excess fat in its liver (whence the dreaded oil) and not elsewhere in its body, as fatty fish do.

In recent years people have become wary of tuna, because of mercury. Here the advantages of sardines, which are

it spread," Nancy Oakes, the chef of the popular Boulevard, in San Francisco, told me during the tuna expedition. "People don't eat much cooked tuna anymore." Almost any ambitious restaurant has grilled tuna on the menu, cooked to remain raw in the middle. My uncharitable theory is that people like grilled tuna or salmon because it's good for them and has very little flavor—just a bland richness. Sardines do have flavor. The fresh sardines that come to restaurants are about 6 inches long, and with their slim bodies and silvery skin they arrive on a plate looking as pretty as trout. But the taste is trout with character. (The trout you get in restaurants and markets is farmed and pallid.)

I go frequently to Rendezvous, a restaurant in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Steve Johnson, the chef, almost always has grilled sardines on the menu. The height of the season is summer, but he also buys sardines frozen, and always from the same Portuguese fishmonger; the fresh sardines available on the East Coast come from across the Atlantic and from the Mediterranean. Johnson, himself an "amateur fisherman," defends oily



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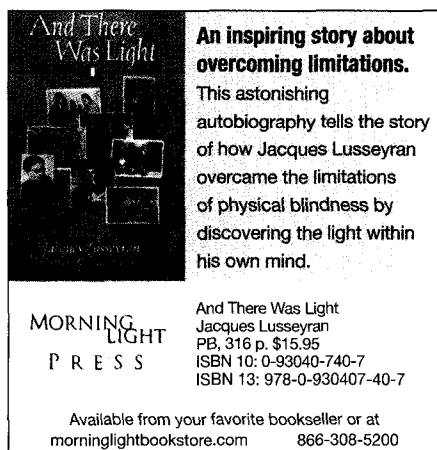
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fish like mackerel and bluefish, a great Northeast treat: "When they're really fresh, they're pristine, and they smell the way they're supposed to—clean and like the sea." Johnson serves sardines with classic accompaniments to oily fish, such as a fennel and black-olive salad with preserved-lemon vinaigrette, and he likes them with smoked paprika, too.

Judy Rodgers, the chef of Zuni Cafe, in San Francisco, has been serving fresh Pacific sardines since the late 1980s, and she buys them whenever Paul Johnson, at the Monterey Fish Market, gets them in. She bases her recipes on dishes she tasted in Italy made with either sardines or anchovies, which are more prized

after I tasted every kind of canned sardine I could find (see sidebar, "Unpacking Packed Sardines").

One place you'll be hard-pressed to find fresh sardines on the menu is in Monterey. Mark Shelley, a documentary filmmaker who works in a building next to the one that still houses the laboratory of Steinbeck's friend Ed Ricketts, the model for "Doc" in *Cannery Row* (it's unmarked and not open to the public), is trying to find investors who, like him, think that young people can and should be lured into discovering the virtues of sardines—maybe by calling them something else. The one time he found sardines on the menu at the Sardine Factory,

Eating low on the food chain is wise: Sardines offer health benefits like tuna's without the same level of toxins.

there: deep-fried sardines with sage leaves and (her modification) lemon slices; grilled sardines served with salsa verde or marinated in her version of *chimichurri*, the peppery Argentinean marinade. Rodgers told me that if the day's fresh sardines don't sell out (they usually do), she grills or fries what's left at the end of the night and stores the fish in a sauce or marinade, to be put on crostini (often "slathered with aioli") and served with drinks—a method she recommends for the home cook who can find fresh sardines.

Most home cooks, of course, can find only canned sardines—and some chefs are not above serving them. Gabrielle Hamilton, the chef of Prune, in New York, serves unclichéd food you might eat at home. But one cliché she likes, and has made a specialty, is canned sardines on Triscuits with mustard. "They got me through some very lean times," she told me. Now she charges \$5 for a whole tin's worth with Triscuits, Maille brand Dijon mustard, and *cornichons*. The brand she chose after extensive tasting is Ruby, from Morocco. I, too, found Moroccan sardines to be my favorite

a landmark Monterey restaurant, they were canned, "beautifully presented" with chopped egg and croutons, and lovely with Chardonnay. Where did they come from? he asked the server, who "hemmed and hawed" and finally revealed what the can said: "Product of Latvia."

I found out more from Bert Cutino, the big, amiable owner of the restaurant, who remembers when Cannery Row was "going huckety-buck" and he would take his father's catch to the canneries. Workers responded to the sounding of horns signaling a new delivery of sardines for processing; you could identify Cannery Row from afar by the smell. "We kind of prayed for it to disappear," Cutino told me.

Most workers wouldn't think of eating canned sardines at home, let alone cook fresh ones. Today Cutino calls sardines a "hard sell": Diners don't want them even if he marinates them in vinegar or uses other tricks to make them taste "less fishy." To me, though, really fresh sardines don't taste fishy at all—and as for canned, it's time to rediscover and embrace an indispensable staple. ▀

Corby Kummer is an *Atlantic* senior editor.

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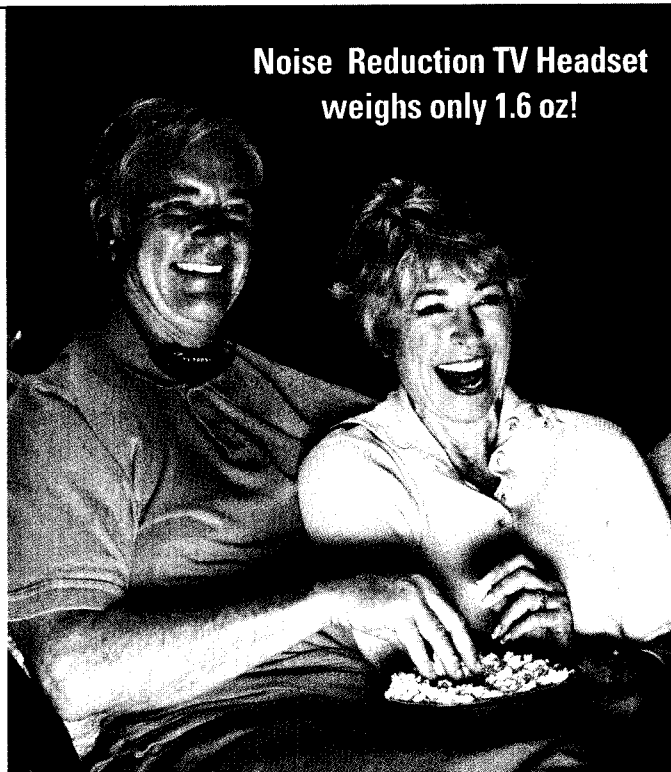
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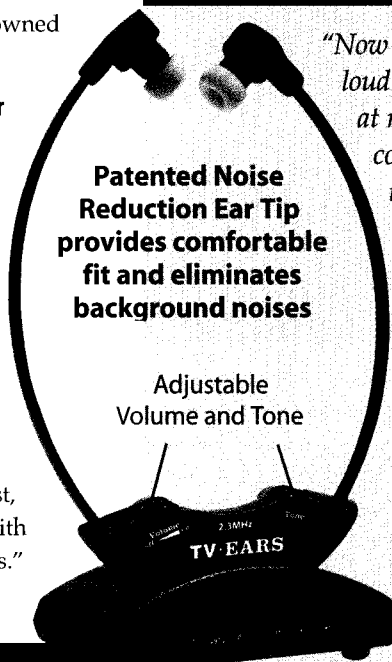
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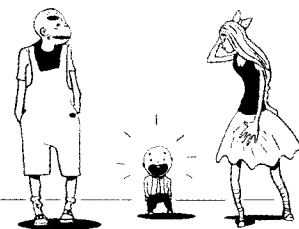
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WORD FUGITIVES

BY BARBARA WALLRAFF



In March, we asked for a word to describe the moment of undignified vulnerability that people in airport security lines experience when they have to take off their shoes. The response most frequently submitted was *insockurity*. Tracy Gill, of New York City, was one of the readers who suggested it, adding, "PS: This entry might be a *shoe-in*." Sorry, but no. Other popular responses included *sole-baring*, *shoemiliation*, *dis-shoeveled*, and *unshoddenfreude*.

James Arnott, of Grand Junction, Colo., wrote, "I am often *pedrified* when the strong-armed TSA agent implores me to remove those comfortable coverings of my feet. I find myself removed from the familiar world of 'No Shirt, No Shoes, No Service' and transported to a foreign land." Derek Eisel, of Seattle, who explained that he "happened to read the question while on a plane" and so "had inspiration and time" on his hands, submitted a sizable list of possibilities, including *Manolo-panicked*, *Birkenstalked*, *JimmyChoogrined*, and *Arched*.

Those who know that one meaning of *sabot* is "a wooden shoe" will probably admire *desabotage*, from Bill Parks, of Covington, Va. Those who have been reading newspapers for a few decades will remember that *Stockholm syndrome* is a name for feelings of attachment that captives (such as hostages taken in a bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1973) sometimes develop for their captors, and therefore may appreciate the coinage *stocking syndrome*, from Norm Tabler, of Indianapolis, Ind.

Other, no-backstory-required suggestions included *susteptibility* (Alexander

Miller, of Grand Rapids, Mich.), *steparation anxiety* (Bill Dunn, of Orlando, Fla.), *mortifeetcation* (George Yezukevich, of South Weymouth, Mass.), *discomfooture* (Andreas Connal-Nicolaou, of Preston, Conn.), *pedanoia* (Kristen Cordell, of Chicago), and *footweary* (Mark Richter, of Radnor, Ohio), plus good old-fashioned *cold feet* (Aaron Riccio, of New York City).



Dick Engel, of Bark River, Mich., suggested that we extend the meaning of another familiar phrase: *toeing the line*. Engel takes top honors.

Also sought in March was "a term for the exclamation we use to warn friends that the person they're talking about is approaching them from behind." "This happened to me recently as I was dishing about someone," Patty Rasmussen, of Conyers, Ga., wrote. "How about *dishn't*, as in 'Oh, no, you *dishn't*!'"

Kelly Brown, of Seattle, wrote, "Exclaiming someone's name to cue a friend that the person they're gossiping about is

approaching is a *hintroduction*." Richard Crane, of Greensboro, N.C., wrote, "That of course is called a *helloveryourshoulder*." Chris Gibbons, of Vancouver, Wash., called it a *slydentifier*; Art Gatti, of New York City, a *borewarning*; and Kate Barton, of Hinsdale, Mass., an *astern warning*.

And Bill Kime, of Ionia, Mich., takes top honors for his apposite, if not especially polite, suggestion that "the term should be a *headshutup*."

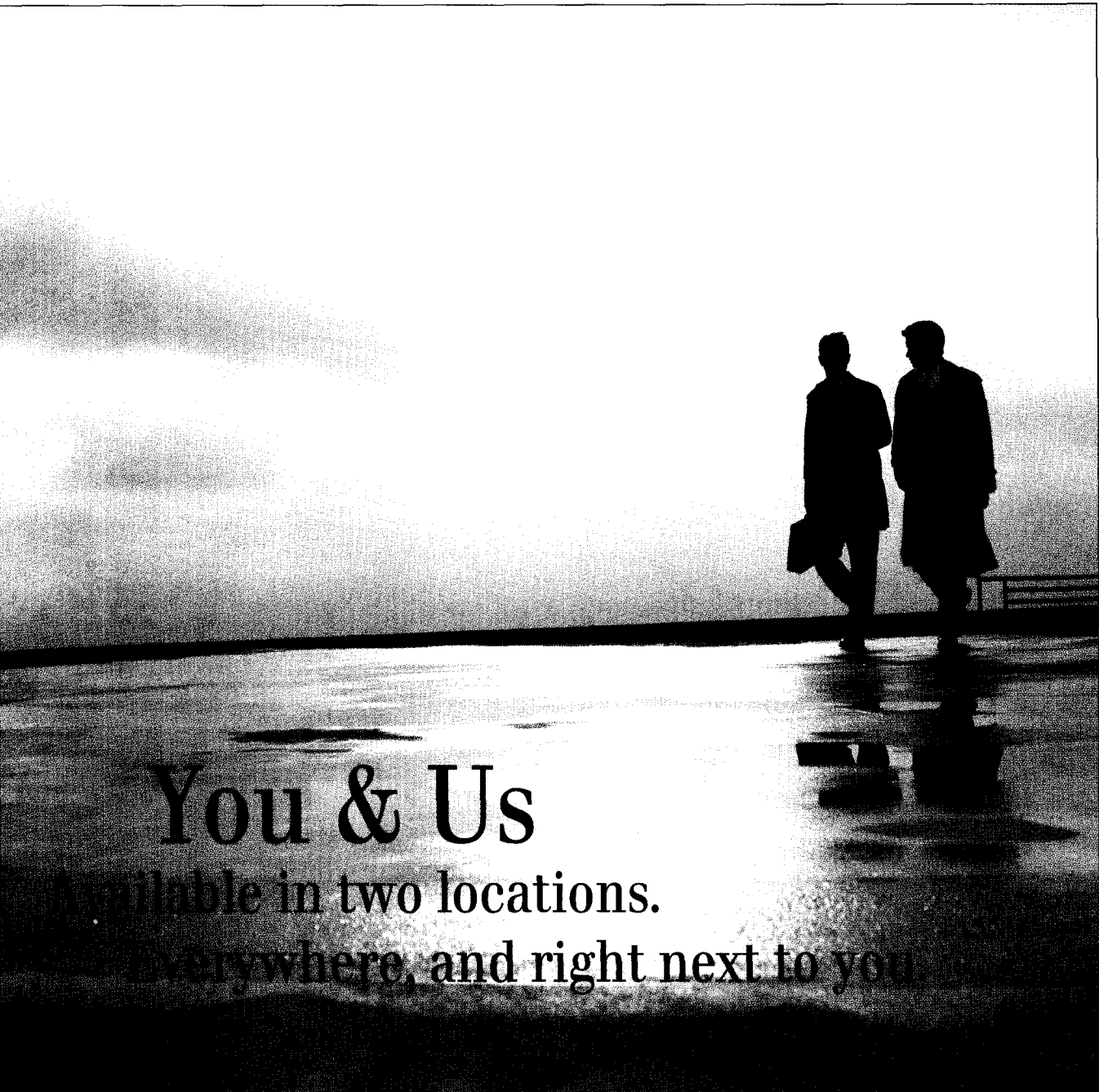
Now J. B. LAWTON, of Dublin, Ohio, writes, "I would like a word to describe the tai chi-like gyrations I inevitably have to go through in order to activate the sensor of an automatic faucet or towel dispenser."

And BILL TIERNEY, of Albany, N.Y., writes, "I'm looking for a word for unpleasant occurrences that come with a job, even though they are not in the official job description—for example, when a hotel bellhop doesn't get tipped or when a comedian gets heckled. In other words, what is the opposite of a perquisite?"

Send words that meet J. B. Lawton's or Bill Tierney's needs to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic Monthly, P.O. Box 67375, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by August 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you'd like The Atlantic's help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment's correspondents will be sent *The Atomic Bazaar*, by William Langewiesche; *On The Wealth of Nations*, by P. J. O'Rourke; and my own Word Fugitives.

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